THE NARROW INTERIOR
OF THE SHORE

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Abstract

For my Master of Arts (Research) thesis I have written *The Narrow Interior of the Shore*. This two-part long poem takes an experimental approach to two distinct ‘fields of action’ and explores, discovers and adopts a formal poetics for each. *The Narrow Interior of the Shore* initially draws on work produced by conceptual writers in the United States along with other practitioners who have adopted a methodological or procedural approach to writing. Part one, *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*, consists of two transcriptions of the movie, *Letter From an Unknown Woman*. The simplicity of these essentially descriptive rewrites of the movie are infected on some level by the writer/viewer’s unwillingness to go beneath the movie’s perceived surface. For example, no attention is paid to the tragic plight of the female lead beyond her physical and audible presence on the screen. Likewise, the weighty historical and political context of the film’s production (it is set in Vienna and was made soon after the atrocities of Second World War which afflicted that city greatly), are completely ignored. One obvious question which arises from this approach is, what is not being said and why. The second part of the poem, *Where I find you or, the shore*, also adopts predefined parameters, however, these are not procedural so much as thematic and stylistic. *Where I find you or, the shore* adopts a gleaning approach to writing, drawing from a selection of sources which include the three months I lived in Vienna, visits to the Picture Gallery at the Kunsthistorisches Museum and conversations with Irish artist, Isabel Nolan. The parameters of this part are defined by the simple decision to write a poem which accounts for a ten minute period when Isabel and I visited the Kunsthistorisches Museum. It is effectively set in one room and is a repeated revisiting of this ten minute period.

Both poems rely heavily on the simple, direct and apparently factual language of immediate observation. This descriptive approach to the surfaces of things and events avoids interpretation at all costs, despite the fact that the content being observed always holds more than what is available to the senses. A tension between what is perceived and what is not mentioned (meaning) is sustained throughout. In *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*, it is a movie which is attended to and ignored at the same time while in *Where I find you or, the shore*, it is the contents of my memory, supplemented with material obtained through research.
The exegesis provides an explanation of my processes, some of the poetic issues I engaged with and provides a series of entry points into the poem for the reader. I also describe some of the challenges I faced, areas that could be explored further and some of the poetic and ethical problems I discovered while writing it. The latter is an attempt to consider my work within a broader cultural and social context.

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Part One

Where I find myself or, when I arrived
Rows of trees
Music
and two horses.

A man runs by.
He holds
an umbrella. A
carriage passes.

Black top hat,
rain and a
streetlamp.

The interior of
a carriage.
The night.

‘You’re going
through with it?’
One of them asks.

Drops of water fall
Night
down.

A white scarf,
black gloves.
‘Good night,’
another says.

He walks through
a set of gates,
two men stay
in the carriage,
and enters a building.

A cigarette
between his lips,
a cane in his hand—
then up the stairs.

A hat.
A light.
Two lights.
Five lights suspended above the stairs.

He enters and removes his overcoat.

ii

The butler holds out an oval silver tray and on it, an envelope.

He removes his jacket. The cigarette, half finished.

He rests the envelope on a bed and rubs his eye.

Rain. From a bowl he splashes water onto his face.

Rain runs down a window pane.

*St Catherine’s Hospital*

‘By the time you read this,’ He dries his face, ‘I may be dead.’ turns up the lamp.

Another cigarette and he continues reading.

Enters to the right decorative around the mirror white collar and walk down the hall is but the places that came to bits cupboard he takes his jacket cigarette between two fingers on his right hand is lift the butler's left-hand touches on it picks up tray on the tray is a litter… But it attended overlooked the back but Butler holds train to hands he takes his jacket off stitching up the back of the white waistcoat through that onto the bed looks the letter scratches as I was with his left hand pics of the letter with this right-hand sacredness right-hand walks to the basin of water open solicitor insults puts up next to him in washes his face Outsiders raining touches the letter Saint Catherine's hospital water on his brow picks up the litter candle
He lights a cigarette, places the match in an ashtray. ‘And as I write, it may become clear.’ He draws on the cigarette a second time.

iii

She watches an old man with a cigarette between his fingers unload a harp from a truck. He passes the harp to another man.

Packing boxes surround her.
  Candelabras.
  A figurative candleholder in packing straw.
  A harp.

Her mother calls from a window above.

Removal men pass around her. A man carrying a ladder, another a rope.
  Books.
  A pulley hanging in the stairwell.
  A piano, hoisted up.

The butler checks an inventory. A man passes. He carries a stack of books. He writes wipes his face walks back into study frowns his bow tie loose Solita downturns the lamp up reads the letter laying on the desk takes a cigarette out takes a match strikes the match lights the cigarette puts the match and twentyish Ray Leaning over there blurring to Texas a grip blurred at hand enters the scene picks up a harp clutching to the side with two hands on the window of the carriage left the high powered hand it to another man who carries it out he seems to be limping excited wind raffle sick colour candelabra lying on outside box with packing straw in mother calls Old man with paper and his pocket and the man walks past another man passes cheer she enters the door a letter piano when
on a small piece of folded paper.

Another man descends. He smokes a cigar.

Her mother calls again.

She walks in and closes the door.

iv

His hands conceal the piano keys. He presses a key.

In the courtyard she sits on a swing listening, looking up at a window.

She strokes the rope with her fingertips. Her hair quivers. Music.

'I wish he would stop that noise.'

His reflection on the polished underside of the piano lid.

'I'm going to have to…'

She is not listening.

His fingers move towards the highest C. His body reflected on the piano lid.

He lowers the fallboard and rests his hands there.

touched up the stairs she walks up the stairs a poly and holding one side of the piano amend holding the other side of the piano the butler the notebook man carrying books up the stairs she scratches the back of her neck with the left hand the butler rights and note and shows it to one of the move when he has a cigarette in his mouth he holds the top of the books with his chin the man passes and descends this there's the Bett Butler hands who has two jacket she was smiles and goes home through Hands and fingers on the piano keys me outside night vines growing on the walled it is not nice day swinging on a swing listening to silent she looks up for the swing up at the windows with their shutters she holds the road pictures with the
A man carries a wooden crate filled with bottles across the courtyard.

She runs to the main entrance and peers in and up the stairs then stands back and waits.

She looks in again. He comes down the stairs carrying a briefcase and wearing a hat.

She opens the door. He smiles, ‘Thank you. Good morning.’

He turns back.

A boy with a dog on a lead runs past. A man passes on a bicycle. ‘You're blushing!’

She pushes an iron along with her left hand.

She dances.
An instructor keeps time with a baton. In another room, children dance. ‘Bow, two, three.’

She walks in.

She re-shelves a thin book and removes one titled Mozart.

She wears gloves and a hat. A man sits at a table nearby.

She opens the book. ‘Although I was not able to go to your concerts.’

She is on a tram. She removes a concert program from a man’s pocket, looks at the cover, then returns it. The man turns, checks with his hand and feels the program still there.

Rain. Two horses and two carriages below. She sits at the window and looks down into the street.
Her mother calls 
and comes into the room 
with a bowl of food. 
Evening.

She returns to the table, 
sits down 
and picks up a fork 
with her left hand.

x

She sleeps. 
Light comes in 
through a window. 
She wakes hearing 
piano music, 
walks to the door, 
esees it open, 
listens.

She walks out of the bedroom, 
down the hallway. 
She is holding 
one finger 
on one hand 
with two fingers 
on the other. 
She passes glass doors 
etched decoratively. 

Her mother sits alone 
playing solitaire.

She walks into the stairwell. 
The music is louder.

She stretches up, unlatches 
and opens a small 
window. Her arm 
is reflected in the glass. A breeze 
blows her hair.

She tilts and rests her 
head to one side.
In the courtyard
her neighbours are
beating rugs.
Dust fills the air.

She tells her friend
to help her carry a
rug up to his room.

Draped rugs.
Neighbours.
A dog.
A young boy.
A swing.

With her friend
and the butler
they carry the rolled rug
up the stairs
to his door.

The butler pulls it inside.
She holds the
doors open and waits
until he’s in another room,
then walks inside.

Music.

She wanders,
looking at everything.
A statue
down the hall way.
An ornate candle holder.

She holds onto her finger
and peers through
a set of glass doors.
She opens them.

she is pounding a
rug pause it down
and it's a fall to
the ground runs
across the
courtyard to help
the butler's too
heavy he asks a
friend to come
and help
neighbours are
pounding racks
the two girls if
the rug put it
down go to the
front and left
again and the
butler ghosts of
the back a boy
and a small dog
up the stairs with
the rug three
buttons down the
back of his smog
Butler goes in
front open is the
door Pause the
rack up wipes her
hands address but
there closes the
doors she keeps it
open a little shoes
her friend away
and then enters
the house slowly
for the dust jack
she walks in to
the hall pass the
bedroom passed
tournament of a
cherub it could
have late flowers
around the Mira
she steps back
candlestick
holder figurative
to hold your hand
An arched window.  
The tops of houses.

On the wall, framed portraits—  
a violin.  
Swords.  
She brushes against a harp.

A pile of sheet music  
on a shelf  
beside a  
framed concert poster.

She upsets the pile.  
The butler hears it fall  
and walks into  
the room.  
She runs out.

xiii

She looks down  
from the upper landing  
and sees a man  
kissing her mother’s  
cheek.

Her mother sends him  
away, adjusts her dress  
and walks up the stairs,  
takes her by the shoulders—  
‘And I’m sure  
if you think about it  
sensibly  
you will  
be very happy.’

They walk into  
the dining room. Her mother  
tells her to sit.  
A canary in a cage.  
A fish in a bowl  
on a side table.  
The round table  
laid out for dinner.

A fern.
Her mother straightens the sofa cover and moves a cushion beside her to the right.

‘You see dear, your mother is not really that old.’

She fidgets. She leans on a chair, her hands on the back of it, her chin on her hand.


Her mother says he has proposed.

Smoke flows from the cigar’s tip.

She runs out and into her bedroom and closes the door. Her mother tries to open it.

‘Be reasonable.’

A train station. Visitors coming and going. They are well dressed. They all wear hats.

He counts the suitcases aloud. ‘Twelve.’ A train’s whistle.

‘Either I’ve lost half a minute or…’
He recounts them asks how long it will take to send them all third class.

She stands beside a leather bag. Light on her face.

A porter pushes a trolley piled with suitcases.
A caged canary sits on top.
He checks his watch.

She is still, watching them.

She walks out of the station.

xv

She jumps from a tram. A cat runs past. She walks, stops, looks up, then runs across the street.

At a set of gates she rings a bell. Someone is standing at a window looking out.

She rings the bell a second time.

The butler walks towards her carrying a candle. He opens the gate. She runs past him

A woman sits in the back reading a newspaper men pass door door to door three lamps are on the counter she stands next to a suitcase behind her as a timetable patterning on the case reporter brings the suitcases and piled high canary of each watch her walks behind the counter out into another room. Is around the side man passes behind with a suitcase and other means and out the door
The tram moves she jumps off drops a bag picks it up a kitten runs across stops and behind her shadows a tree to her right she walks across the paved road begins to run a curtains a man moves she rings a bell the bell shakes but the comes out its dark is carrying a candle which lights his face chest and she pushes to gate open and runs
up the stairs—
candles burn.
A balustrade
curving to the right.
She runs to a door,
knocks, straightens her
gloves and hat and
knocks again.

Waits.
Listens.
Knocks slowly again then
turns and looks down the stairs.
She walks down them
and out into the courtyard.

Shadows of leaves.
A dog laying
at the bottom of the
stairs.

She walks up to his
door and knocks.
Then knocks on a
window pane.

She walks down the hallway
and into an empty room.
There is no furniture.

She sits on the second step
of a small ladder.
Then sits outside his door.
She hears the door
downstairs open.

He walks in and
up the stairs. She hides
in a shadow, looks
to see who it is.

Black top hat.
White scarf.
A woman giggling.
The woman walks into his house. He holds her left hand. She goes down all the stairs.

xvi
He reads the letter, a cigarette in his right hand. He creases his brow.

xvii
She walks along a street with her mother and stepfather. The sun is shining. A woman greets him and he raises his hat. A man presents his son, a Lieutenant, to the three of them. The two women carry umbrellas. The two men, swords hanging from their belts. The men and women greet each other. A horse and cart pass then they all cross the street.

The foyer with a woman can returns around he comes up the stairs takes a woman by hand in Leeds her and Tess how Two peers around the corner walks down the stairs slowly walks further down the stairs shadow shadow in the back wall is an study still reading the letter cigarette between his fingers he frowns smoke from the cigarette rises and blurring blaring blurring to women dressed formally walk with the man this summer is sunny he raises hate to lieutenant and his son Billy tenant tips has had to bowels Lieutenant kisses him mother's hand both of the women carry umbrellas stepfather is he holds his head in the sand farmer's carriage passes being drawn by two black courses first station sign on the wall general son's war.
She walks beside the Lieutenant.
They walk slowly past a brick wall and a shop.

Bells.

He asks her about the music in Vienna.

Two horses and a carriage.
A man with a hat.
Her mother with an umbrella and hat.

A fountain.
A girl with her hand dipped in the water.
A brass band.

The Lieutenant and her.
A fountain and brass band.
Pigeons scatter as they walk through—four to the right.

He salutes another soldier.
Then another. And another. She bows.

At a table outside, her parents, and a General sit. Two chairs lean against the table.
They sit together.

He says he has feelings for her – ‘Sorry, let me finish.’

The wind ruffles her blouse.

She says there is someone who she is already in love with.

Her hat, decorated with flowers.

She says he lives in Vienna. He is a musician. She says her parents do not know but she is engaged to marry him.

Her parents.
A brass band.
They walk back to the table.
The music stops.
Clapping.
Her father pours wine.
The band moves away from the fountain.

They stop to let them pass, then walk towards the table.

they sit down a league of this marble sculpture through the fence of Fountain in the background man woman stand discussing it to tenants son speaks and looks very serious and raises his right hand to make a point and then lets it fall again the wind is blowing her flowers and moves She nods clutches who bag the win now blows to small ribbon sec come from the primavera had an ornate background permit of cannonballs sunshine on his head he holds a sword with his left hand stands the parents are excited they walk back through the gate a cannon on the left a group of people musicians in the background father pours wine the brusque A band marches off they stop and then through the musicians a man
Music.

The Lieutenant and General bow and leave.

‘But you must have said something?’
‘I told him— I told him I wasn’t free.’

xxii

He sits in his study reading the letter.
The butler carries in a tray with coffee and cognac in it.

He lets his neck rest into his hands and continues reading.

xxiii

Standing in front of long curtains she puts on a black dress.
A woman sits at a sewing machine next to her.

She takes a sip of tea and enters the room.

‘Very pretty.’
Chandeliers.

xxiv

‘Very charming, very charming.’

A candle.
A woman in a black dress.
A man smoking a cigarette.
Snow covers the ground.
A man lights a street lamp.

She walks through an arch
and stands in the street,
outside his house,
listening.

Singing.

A family passes and
the man raises his hat.
Another man passes
 carrying a drum
then a man wearing a hat.

She stands beside a statue
of a woman
holding a child.

He walks around the corner,
passes a café.
The shadow from his hat
covering his face.
She watches.
He walks to the left and up
to a small band.

Music.
A small boy
with braces.

He turns, sees her
and smiles.
He walks towards her.
She wears a black dress.

‘I’ve seen you before,
a few nights ago.’

He mentions the band
then puts his hat on.
They walk.
He jokes. He puts
his arm around her.
They walk past a café.
   A pattern on the windows.
Cigarette smoke.
Curtains.
   A carriage wheel.

xxvi

He opens a door
and speaks with a waiter.

Two men enter and
she steps aside
to let them pass.

He asks the waiter
to let them know
he will not rehearse today.

A man interrupts
and is told to wait.
He smokes a cigarette.

The waiter has a pencil
behind his ear
and a hat in his left hand.

He gives him a few coins
and walks back to her.

Another man interrupts.
He holds a
long cigarette holder.

He puts his hat on
and they leave the café.
Together, they walk
into the street.

The talk he
smiles he puts his
hat on and they
walk together
talking past
windows
curtained with
lace they stand in
the shadows the
10 walk and walk
back the way
they've come he
puts his left arm
around here they
walk along
beside the café
around the corner
Into the café
away to carries
drinks up the
stairs on a silver
platter a fan is on
the left looks
back at someone
leaves the café
minute between
the curtains at the
back men are
playing pool to
me and enter he
takes out a
cigarette the
waiter lights at a
man sitting in the
corner is reading
the newspaper to
lamps on the wall
he holds is
happiness left-
hand gifts the
waiter some
money
He leaves she's
waiting at the
doors outs outside
is a horse he
leaves he walked
They climb into a carriage.

They sit at a large table.
A restaurant.
He ties a napkin around her neck.
Patterned fabric.
Buttons.
They sit beside each other.
A carved back.
Three candles.
Four glasses.
He holds a menu.
A waiter asks him to autograph a concert program for a woman at another table.
He signs with his right hand.
The waiter draws large curtains together a little and pours red wine.
A lobster.
Using his hands he breaks off a claw and lies it on her plate.
He removes another claw.
‘Please, please, talk about yourself.’
The intricately carved back of the sofa.
‘You know, you don’t talk very much’
He pushes his plate away.
He rests his left elbow on the table.
Both hands near his mouth.
He sits back,
touches his mouth
and looks at her.

‘A sorceress.’

xxix

They sit together
in an open carriage.
A blanket across their legs.
He wears a scarf.

A park.
Trees.
Fallen snow.

‘Stop here.’

They walk through the snow.
They smile.

He asks for
a white rose
from old woman
selling flowers.

He sits back and smiles again.
The old woman
warms her hands
by a fire.

The carriage.
A white rose.

The carriage moves on.

xxx

Wiener Prater

rest his fingers against slabs he smiles and racist fingers against this cheek piercing shadow Base it on the open carriage is night smiles. Light on her face she takes a scarf and taxes and under his jacket looks down and looks away carriage comes to a stop the horses SWAAY he gets out coast to an old woman selling flowers and buys a weird white rose she's sitting on the carriage he went those who hear the old woman warms her hands by a fire back in the carol She holds the White Rose the driver turned around and speaks to them the carriage passes out of the scene they both walked through the snow nine fence in the foreground trees Prata stand in the background fairground who
where they walk through the snow.
Music.

A ferris wheel.

Bare trees.

A window display with wax figures of Napoleon and Mozart.
A prone knight in armour.

A man hands her a toffee apple using a small woven basket at the end of a pole.

They sit together in a make-believe train carriage.
An amusement ride.
Out the window a painted backdrop of Venice passes by.

She fidgets with the rose.

A black scarf.
A black hat.

She leans forward. Behind her a curtain held back by twisted cord.

‘Where would you like to go to next? France? England? Russia?’

He leaves the carriage and walks to the woman selling tickets.

continue to walk on she holds a rose his jacket is opened a scarf hangs lives around as Nick never walk and stop at the shop window of a model of Mozart suit of armour She's handed toffee apple basket from a stall they now set in amusement ride she's animated fidgeting with the rose outside the window's painted scenes roll past Venus he leans forward's fingers held together he smiles she looks up he smiles she's continues to talk a gondola the scene outside stops she leans back into the corner of the seat he leans forward and puts his hands on his knees he stands and leave the ride walks to the woman looking after it The old man the bike with the scenes attached to drink just to leave the scene rises another
‘Switzerland!’

An old man
pulls on a leaver.
Venice rises.
He starts pedaling and
scenes of Switzerland
roll by.

Mountains.
A castle.
A river.
A tree.
A castle.
A mountain.

She holds the flower.
She wears a white
blouse with small buttons
down its front.
The curtain,
decorated with trim.

An ashtray
on the windowsill.

Out the window, a castle.
Mountains.

Sky.
Mountains.
Trees.
Snow.

She speaks quickly.
He lowers his head
to listen. His hair
parted to the right.

Mountains and trees.
‘What mountain is that?’

A castle.

He puts out his cigarette.
A train whistle sounds.
He moves next to her
and takes her hand.

scene is behind it
he blows the
whistle and sheep
on a hell
foreground a tree
the scene scrolls
past is smoking a
cigarette village
in the
background the
coastline
mountains a tree
mountains the
cigarette smoke
drift up the glass
she fits it's with
the rose she
smiles a tree
cigarette tells
down he looks at
here she shakes
head and smiles
She talks scene
continues to roll
past outside the
window a tree
castle coastline
mountains he
puts a cigarette
out and sits next
to her and takes
your hand and
both of his hands
and hold said she
holds the White
Rose and left-
hand and watches
him and move so
I and watches
him.
‘Why do you like to climb mountains?’

He puts his arms around her and draws her towards him. He blows her hair.

The old man moves the roll of landscape and tells them both to change.

He leaves the carriage and asks the old woman for another country.

‘We have no more countries left.’

A screen is lowered.

xxxii

An all-woman band play a waltz.

He holds her and they dance.

A viola.
A double bass and a clarinet.

The women complain about having to play for so long.

The music stops and he claps. She adjusts her scarf.

He touches the scarf with his index finger,

Holds her. The old man on the bike outside of the carriage he exits again walks to the old woman and asks for another ride it gives her money and returns to the carriage the old man lowers seen in a cafe a band is playing a woman a double bass cello violin piano they're dancing there is no announcing the Roman. Music stands are shaped like liars win on the base is some beer needs a sausage and continues to play a dancing in the centre of the room the woman finish he claps she fidgets with him. She holds the White Rose is standing close together he touches on With his index finger claps and
then claps again.
They turn, smiling,
towards the band.
The women have left.

He walks to the piano
and plays.

She leaves her coat on a chair
and stands behind him,
then moves to his right
and stands beside a pillar.

She crouches beside the piano
and watches his hands.

‘I don’t even know where you live.’

She looks into his eyes
then back at his
hands and the keys.

xxxiii

A carriage
stops outside
a building. They
climb out.
He pays the driver.

He opens the gate
and she enters. He follows.

They walk into the foyer.
Stairs curve
up around to the right.
He leads her up.

Violin music.

They enter the house.
He takes off her shawl
and kisses her.

turns the women
musicians have
lived the stage he
walks over to the
piano the liar
shaped music
stands
Begins to play the
piano she stands
to his ride
watching and
listening to me in
the background
and Niels
crouches down
beside him he
looks up she
watches his
hands as fingers
on the keys his
hands on her face
in the back
watching a
candle burns
A horse pulling a
carriage to climb
out of the
carriage he pays
the driver opens
the gate she
enters and work
into the courtyard
the cobblestones
diagonal
shadows from the
iron gate he
opens the door
for candles
looking down the
stairs and they
come up here he
and the
Lights off and it
is dark he takes a
few check on
hold to close and
kisses
A shop. 
A woman helps her with a jacket. 
He sits down. She walks around him.

Black fur around her neck. Her hand slipped into a black fur muff.

He stands, leans against a low balustrade. A mirror. Long folds of curtain to his right.

He says he is leaving Vienna and invites her to come to the station.

He says goodbye and leaves the shop.

The shop window. A carriage.

She asks to leave work early.

large curtains hanging woman enters she is trying on more clothes she puts on the jacket the woman exits the kittens ruffle he arrives and sits down she comes out and up the stairs is a fur colour its Hampshire notices he smiles she turns her arms out to the sides she turns Chandelier above them he faces reflected in a oval mirror around small table in the back the face and profile the dress shines the back of his head he stands and she curtsies the horse and carriage passes snow on the ground white lace curtain she speaks to the woman Runs smiling through the curtains she runs along the fence at the train station's steam comes from beside the train he sees her walks over drops a cigarette takes his hat off holds both her hands in

She enters the train station and runs down the platform.

An iron fence. A bell ringing. The sound of steam released from a train.

People talking.

He walks over. Holding her hand.
he says he doesn’t to leave.
She says she
will wait for him.
Someone calls his name
and he smiles

then leans against the fence
and touches her chin
with the back of his hand.

Platform 6.

He kisses her hand
and runs back to the train.

A breeze blows
through her hair.
A station guard.
The train leaves the station.

Violin music.

She turns and
walks away.

xxxvi

A nun
carries a candle
down a wide hallway.

She stops to
write on a blackboard.

A white basin
of water.

Rows of beds
separated by screens.
A nun draws across a curtain.

Names on a blackboard
and beneath them
the word father.

The nun sits alongside her bed.
A candle.

his hands number
six above he
tends back she
looks up at him
black hair is as
loose at the front
How high is close
and he jumps on
the train as a man
waves from the
train looks down
10 to head to the
left and then turn
to body and
walks away
slowly along
beside the fence
people in the
background
moving fades and
none is walking
down long plane
corridor carrying
a candle she
writes on the
board and then
goes through a
door is a basin
steaming she
looks through
Pupils a curtain
across Walton to
another area 12th
of November on a
board above the
beard there is the
word father
beside the bed
and a none is
writing the letter
sitting beside the
bead small candle
burns and none in
the background
She asks her questions and writes down her replies.

Her head on the pillow. Her braided hair. A single braid.

He sits and studies with a circular magnifying glass a photo of a boy. A globe.

Then another photo, of her with the boy. A bottle of cognac.

She wears two sets of pearls. Long heavy curtains. She wears a white fur jacket.

He turns to face her. They enter a room and close the door. A boy sits up. He hands her an empty glass which she sets down on a side table. A fireplace. A bookshelf.

She kisses him. ‘Goodnight.’ The boy calls her back. Pictures of dogs.

He runs from the room she is laying in bed here platter it in a single plait she talks the none gets up and leaves the room looks up Reading letter he looks through a circular magnifying glass photo of a boy and a photo of hair in the boy in the basket of the balloon smiles cigarette smoke is he looks at a third photo the boy now older outside of a large building she's inside the husband is helping she wears two rows of pearls who dresses office shoulder she walks across through fraud curtains candelabra is and let above them They leave the room he opens the door for hair the boy is sitting up in bed with crossed legs she takes the glass back asks to sleep she stands behind him fair either side she leaves they start walking down the stairs
and climbs into her bed.

Her husband waits below.

She goes to the boy.
He sits up.
She plays with his finger.

She turns the light off, then the lamp.

‘Goodnight.’

xxxviii

A woman walks into the entrance hall.
A large baroque staircase at her left.

Two soldiers pass.
Two women descend.

‘Every moment is measured.’

She enters wearing white, crosses the hall.
A fur around her neck.

She ascends the stairs.

Two men and a woman look down from above.
They recognise him and watch him greeting two women.

She notices this and watches him.

‘Second act.’

The audience clap.

She walks along a patterned rug,
pulls the curtains open
and enters a theatre box.
Men stand to
let her pass.

She sits down.

The light shines
on his face.
She leans forward to look.
The music begins.
She watches him,
looks down at to ground,
then raises her eyes
to him again.

‘Suddenly
in that one moment
everything was in danger.’

She looks away,
then back.

She stands
and leaves.
Curtain.
Curtain.

He looks to up and
sees she has gone.

He holds white gloves.

She walks
along a corridor
and down the stairs.

Candelabras.

Across the marble floor.

White fur.

xxxix

A vacant chair.
Her husband stands and exits.

She leaves the theatre.

Horse hooves on the cobbled street.
A sphinx.
Pillars.
Shadows

A figurine of Mozart.

He approaches her.

A black bow tie.

He says they have met before. She goes to leave. He asks where. He looks down, then looks at her. He looks down again and continues talking, asking where.

She asks what is he waiting for. 'I can’t explain it.'

He touches his chin. She looks down then up. He continues. Light falls on the right side of his face.
She leaves quickly, down the stairs, and climbs into a carriage. Her husband is inside. He smokes a cigarette. Horse hooves. A porter waves in another carriage. She fidgets with a pair of opera glasses. Her husband speaks about their marriage, their son. He inhales on his cigarette, and exhales. Her fur collar.
A breeze coming in the carriage window. She plays with the opera glasses. Her voice trembles. She explains she needs the other man and he needs her. The carriage stops. Her husband gets down, then helps her out.

Two large plants either side of a door. She walks away down the stairs the pearls swinging her husband is on a waiting carriage she hops in the carriage leaves carriage drives down the street husband sits beside Looking stern test talking looks at how looks for lawn looks back husband takes a puff cigarette and hails in the smoke play from his nose is talking she talks to them sit next to each other she is holding the theatre glasses the fear continues to talk to you (embroidery is jacket she talks turns to look at him and She looks upset hair is curled her husband takes another puff on a cigarette carriage stops her husband gets up of the carriage and then helps her out the backs of horses and the rains from the horses to the drivers hands they into the
They enter the house.

On one wall
mounted animal heads.
Above, a candelabra
and one candle burning.
Crossed swords.

Another candelabra
but with no candles alight.

Two shadows on the wall.

She walks away
and enters a room
where her son sleeps.
She lies her opera glasses
and her shawl
down on the bed.
She bends down and kisses him.

Two strings of pearls, sway.

She wakes the boy
and guides him back,
holding his hand,
to his own bed.

He says goodnight to his father
below, on his way.

She pulls back the bedcovers.
He sits on the edge
and she lifts his legs into bed.

Pictures of dogs.
A lamp.

The two strings of pearls.

She stands at the head of
the bed and leans
on the bedhead.
She turns out the lamp.

Shadows and
curtains.

house through
and arched door
way he puts out a
cigarette swords
displayed on the
wall candelabra
with one candle
burning sorts
crossed middles
displayed on the
wall
She walks
towards the stairs
slowly with your
head down she
takes off if a coat
kisses him on his
temple takes the
covers off how up
some out of the
beard bleeding
across them to his
own rain the boy
yawns it’s his
good night to this
for shit need
someone to his
own rhyme calls
but covers it
claims
He says you're
wonderful she
stands behind the
thing down and
she turns the
lamp pulls the
show the window
shakedown holds
She clutches the curtains, presses her face into them and cries. Her shoulders quiver.

"I am xliii

A bell rings. A train. Steam rises.

She wears black. She climbs into one of the carriages with her son.

A man helps carry his suitcase in.

A guard tells her the carriage where they now sit is supposed to be quarantined.

He ushers them both out, lifts down the suitcase and moves them to a different carriage.

He shows them to their seats and she tells him her son is travelling alone.

‘You can see better if you sit over here.’

She sits next to him. He stands up. She holds his hands in hers.

She draws him down next to her.
A whistle.

The guard asks her to leave.
She hugs her son.

She leaves the carriage
and closes
the door.

The train begins to move.
A woman waves to a man.
She waves.
A woman waves.
A man waves from the train.
A woman waves back
from the train.

Steam shifts out along beside the train.

The final carriage passes.

Five lights suspended above.
An iron fence.

She walks beside the fence.

A round pillar.

A soldier.

A person laying on a stretcher
carried by three men
passes.
A small crowd watch
and talk quickly amongst themselves.
‘Typhus.’

xliv

She walks into a cafe.

A fern.
One pillar.
Curtains.
Two men sit
at a table
playing chess

She walks down the stairs.

A man and a boy
sit at another table
drinking soup.

The man stands.
She asks him if he is here.

She walks back up the stairs.

A waiter is tidying
a rack of newspapers.

A fern.

A light.
A church spire.

She walks beside café,
looks up
to a window above.

An old man asks
if she wants to buy any flowers.
She walks over to where he sits.

A bicycle leans
against a wall.

She buys
white flowers.
The old man tips his hat.

She wears black.
White flowers and
white ruffled cuffs.

She crosses the street,
looks up at the windows,
then walks to the front gate
two minute
playing chess her
right of food and
she walks down
the stairs and asks
to speak with him
the waiter goes
and asks another
man who she
approaches and
asked the same
question as he's
told is more
likely to be found
at the Ritz these
days she walks up
the iron gate
along beside an
iron fence slowly
Pass the fan along
beside the Cafe
Street thanks
above her
automobile
behind her she
looks up to the
windows and
write the lights
Alan Glen offers
her some flowers
which is selling
she approaches
him and says of
take clothes he
gives her a bunch
of white roses she
pays him the
man… At she
crosses paved
street
Sup at the
window again
and rings the bell.

Her husband,
watching her from a carriage,
tells the driver to drive on.

xlvi

She walks up the stairs.

Shadows cast from the balustrade
on the wall beside her.
She turns, stops, and rings the doorbell.

The butler opens the door.
She asks to see him.
The butler bows
and welcomes her in.

She enters his study.

A desk.
A stack of paper.
A lamp.

She looks around
then walks into the room
where the piano sits.
She lies the white flowers
down on a small table.

She walks to the window, smiles
and turns around.

He walks into the room,
hands in his pockets.

She takes off her coat.
He takes her by the left arm
and leads her to a chair.
He turns the light up.

A mirror

‘As far as I’m concerned,
all the clocks in the
world have stopped.’

comes to the iron
gates and rings
the bell she is on
this and
silhouette a light
comes on her
husband sits on
the carriage down
the road and CC
into the gate she
walks up the
stairs stops turns
it continues to
walk up as a
black hat on she
rings a bell the
door but the
pierced through
small curtain
Bowers lets her
The house is dark
Butler opens
another door she
enters a study the
butler then leaves
the room she
walks them to as
studio piano
letters closed she
goes to the
window looks out
turns he comes
into the room
with his hands in
his pocket he says
this is
It takes a jacket
off and Solite up
he thinks the like
the darkness left
atrium in the
previous night
just far as I’m
concerned all the
clocks in the
world of stopped
He leaves the room.

She fidgets with her hands. She stands and looks around the room.

A pile of sheet music.

He comes back into the room.

A mirror.

He leans on the piano. She clasps her hands together.

A curtain held back by coiled rope.

She walks to him and lies her hands on the top of the piano. He leans there. Then stands, compliments her on her dress.

He says he no longer plays the piano.

His right hand is in his trouser pocket.

He explains he looked in the mirror and realised the young prodigy was no longer young.

He moves closer to her, lifts the lace covering her face. They kiss.

Her eyes lower as he removes her hat.

He offers her a drink, and leaves the room for champagne.

He leaves the room course out for his butler sits down and then stands up crosses her arms across your body he comes back into the room They talk about a Greek god Greek goddess she holds one hand over her other hand covering a wedding ring breathes deeply Toasty hands they stand it either side of the piano keys for leans on the piano she wrists to hands on it and ornate mirror hangs on the war between them she arrests her right hand down near the keys approaches here but just right hand in his pocket one curtain hang slack over the window the other He walks back and forward and looks at here goes over to hair puts his arm around me maths and lace hanging from the front of the hat and kisses her eyes closed a little she takes
Her lip quivers.

Two strings of pearls.
A broach pinned to her chest.

He calls out from the other room.

He takes a bottle from a cabinet.

‘You know, you are a very strange woman.’

A small single candle reflected in a mirror.

He leaves to get ice and asks if she is getting lonely.

She takes her gloves and coat.

A small candle holder with a single candle.
A vase with two handles.
White flowers.
She walks down the stairs, passes on old man, and leaves the building.

A drunk soldier approaches. He salutes and starts following her.

He calls out. She runs.

Shadows.
A church spire.

Down a set of stairs and out into the street. A fountain.

this hat off and leaves the room she calls and he turns back before leaving turns and leaves. To small cupboard to get champagne invoice quavers stands looking at him being unable to see him talking to eyes and Lois is in the open for another cupboard and takes out a bottle comes back into the room does is here in the mirror leaves to get ice you getting lonely out here. She's almost crying except she picks up a bag jacket leaves the white roses during chessboard vase in the candle holder she leaves Tess home walks down the stairs Butler is walking with a basket food covered with the white neck can she walks out into the street large drunk soldier staggers towards her tips as hat tries to talk to her
Three lamps.

She walks in the street.

The sound of water.

Her black dress trails along the cobbled street behind her.

xliii

A bed.
A crucifix above.
Three candles.

A bed framed by four candles and a chair against a wall.

A screen.

She sits, writing a letter.
A wedding ring on her finger.
With her left hand she rubs her eyes.

xlix

*St Catherine’s Hospital.*

Music.

He raises his chin from his hands.

I

He lifts the lace from her hat

She runs from him down in the street across downstairs to courtyard with the Fountain three griffins holding up the fountain three lamps for lamps to the left her son has died of typhus three candles crucifix on the wall a white curtain to the left bed with four candles that each post Two She is writing the letter a wedding ring on her left hand he is For Cinco Love puts her what her left hand to her face Blair he is reading the letter it finishes with the blob of thank there is a note attached telling him that she has died but she spoke his name before she did die looks up from his desk for lawn and white clover for lamp in the top left corner deaths the cause white lace from head
and kisses her.

Smoke

He takes off his hat. ‘Hello.’

Smoke

They dance a waltz.

Candelabra.

Smoke

They sit together in a carriage. She holds a white rose.

Smoke

She takes a toffee apple. She holds a white rose.

They dance.

A band plays.

Smoke

She kneels beside him as he plays the piano.

He touches her face.

The butler walks into the room. A clock strikes. The butler places his hand on his back and points to his watch.

‘Do you remember her?’

The butler nods.
He presses his thumb to his teeth.

He writes her name on a piece of paper and shows him.

A carriage.

They walk to the window.

Horses’ hooves. A horse’s tail. Carriage wheels. The cobbled road and then a horse.

Two men in top hats. A guard walks to the carriage and a man inside nods.

He stands looking down, his hand resting on the door latch. He undoes his vest.

‘Bring me my things.’

Two men walk up the stairs. One, rings the doorbell. The butler touches his elbow.

The butler opens the door and the men enter.

White flowers in a vase on a table.

A serpent candle holder.

He takes a single pencil and writes her name on it and hold set up the peace looks down here carriage outside it gets up and goes to the window also who's on the Cobblestone Road speaks from a wheel another horse 32 men in top hats and a soldier and the man with a top man he holds the window latch In and does has white waistcoat man walks up the stairs to mean and ring the doorbell but like last spell by post the door shut him rights dominion one removes hat before entering
rose.
The two men leave.

He shakes the butler’s hand and puts on his hat and leaves.

He closes the door.

He walks down the stairs, slowly, into the street and then over to the carriage.

He looks back and sees a phantom girl standing beside the door.

He lowers his eyes, then head.

He walks to the carriage and climbs in.
Part Two

*Where I find you or, the shore*
Immanent arch and transfer

HALL X

Scaffolding and pulleys. Rope drawn taunt in verticals. Bricks and ships. A fine day for bowing. An island. Tiers and a red jug. Layers of arches

A dog beside you, drying off. The holiday you were promised where, further up the hill, visitors were admiring photographs.

The border is seen solely as longing. It is not really a fixed line. None of the ocean wants to support you. Wave and WAVE, the hand in all its touches.

Sailing. A kiss of the DOG’S soft, wet nose.

At the tops of the pillars a second sky and there you are, holding FLOWERS and blowing off reminders of disquiet. And these fall near the VISITORS. And it has been a long time.

You write, “Sometimes arches” then insert a lake in the foreground, circled by Persian buttercups.

He paddled out, looking back intermittently, to fetch the ball. And you took a photograph because he reminded you of a soft THING.
You said, “I fabricated this whole display from strips of linen after dying their ends yellow.”

Easily assured and this colour, in its own independence, shifts expressions to the perimeter where, without judgement, a city is being devised.

An initial map of this city:

Oil
Wool
Gold
Iron
Ochre
Yellow
Wood
Twine.

A dog.

As you said of the latter, “Not being closed, the animal is inscrutable.”

ANIMAL I

The dog under the hand and the hand in repose.

A leaf
caught in your hair

HAND I

The hand HOLDS an ornate sparrow (reason’s threat). Around its throat, rubies, similar in size to its little eyes. Five specks of crimson facets and frames. The distributed light. The light, from a candle outside the border (city). A little of each.
A soft hand which has never felt weight.

HALL X

You whistled a single ascending note.  
I remember it was slow.

The sound was followed by an influx of visitors. 
Men in black shoes and blue woolen trousers.
SPACE between their feet and their steps.

The clean lines were showing wear. This form of paws at the shoreline.

You fashioned little pools of red. Rubies. In the centre of the hall was a rug. The dog will lay here as we talk.

The large windows were cleaned.  
Salt air, a long way away. Sails, invisible. Sails somewhere where you pointed.

A waterfall is happening.

A peacock feather in the hat of a man running in. Bagpipes. Others too running to join the dance. 
Holding hands and two kissing

There is a light pressing the underside of the foliage. 
Confusion is a garden.

ANIMAL II

Something moves.

A dog appears and carries sensations across to where we rest, holding hands, observing the PAINTING.
You pat him.

ANIMAL III

Folly-broach, ruby and tumbling ghost.
A cloak draped across those tiny shoulders. An
EMBLEM clasped deep in the black FUR – the silver
fist holding zones of recession. The silver wreath of birch.

Solid things beside a photograph of a dog.

WORDS, A VEHICLE
for movement and the movement of sleep and
the movement of sensing. Who
lies at a true angle to the sun?
Who unfurls or falls
to MAKE a splash?

Motion
the shoreline

HAND II

The word is A vehicle
This touching.
The ceremony of placing non-accumulates
deep within fur.
Drawn up to the white roses
and other scented touchstones.
SENSES IN. Drawing in.

The HAND is to carry
others. To see, they cannot be
divided. Hand to word.
Not reading. Reading as a
liberation of the mouth and ears.

She said,

“A photograph
of steam.” And, “A photograph of walking.”
ANIMAL IV

FILM
and it is
an animal.
Filmed by the

hand. Roused out but still hiding.
The waves of excursion. This
is SIGHT. This
is bridging.

The journey in warm early January.
No rivet, no rock. No public. This is not writing.
The smaller gap – a place. The tiny place
of gap. There is a feast.

May-it-be-chosen and
ANIMAL feast.

This is inaccurate and natural. There
is a river running swiftly through the public.

HALL X

Elements of THE OCCASION.
Piece by piece. The OIL and
trembling marble.
Even in sleep, needs. Epic gestures
of lines gather across this hall. Really, a street light
is a little better.

Fur to witness from.

A dog. A working thing. A thing
that watches.
Not a language thing. Not a cinema.
“But,” she said,
“here is a list of soft things.
And no Americans.” Not
a movie with pulleys and levers. A
swimming pool with a dog
climbing out
and shaking itself dry.
HAND III

PORTRAIT of a dignitary’s left hand on a desk,
whereby we find tension
before us, between looking and looking at and it.
Taut DISPLAY of motion. The brutishness of the bulky folds of the former
conceal a silence that rests following an assertion of the latter.

Her hair is tussled and crisp after swimming in the ocean.
Now fine and shining. A treason against touch.

Knowledge is a game of substitution and renovation. To be
really inside there must be no building.
A mute incantation.
Yellow wool, twine, black sequins, a horse shoe.

HALL X

A MOVIE of Bruegel the Elder. All the children
turning to look where they play; playing
with tops and hoops. Mostly a motion of orange flame.
TWINE. Rolling hoops
into a construction.
Bricks piled, abandoned to
little ruddy imaginings. Movies
LATER.

One in seven noises never enters memory.
Firm memory too, only allows
four moving suns. Fine golden
bands circling a crystal wine glass.
The wine sipped by pale lips. A clouded sun.
TALKING begins, and ends, in the middle.

This is not writing. And today it is several moves ahead and the visitors all wave back. Today it is recondite movement. It is not meant for writing. POOLS of small places. No bridge, no river, no ocean ground into a greeny-blue paste. A pupil, of course, surrounded by beautiful heavy foliage. This is you.

A tickle across your palm.

Please, this is not writing.

An upside down boy. A red hat on a rooftop. Hoops being rolled. Others carrying and waving sticks. White aprons. A street vanishing away

ANIMAL V

Remember the PLATE heaped with fruit and GAME, those somber apples we've now forgotten? A curtain raised?

Possibly another game, or a dog shaking itself after being in the rain? Remember the bridge to the dining table was grand and essential? The waves were wolves?

The eye enters the page through any one of the arches and the stage is an inexhaustible beauty (animal).

Cardinal details
PORTRAIT of an opening, framed.
Every portrait a proxy for the labour of the object.
Oil.
History has had many photographies.

HALL X

A dictated autobiography of information
via a late evening séance.
It begins, with omissions, “Long gloves imported from Austria.”
Then fleshed out with spatial precision. Great circles
under ringed and bare fingers before,
midway down the page,
“TO TH PUBLIC” then,
“A fopish boy of concepts and history.”
Each day the thread is relocated and tension plied. She looks back
to see if time is filling up.
Ignore caution. Praise the hammer.

HAND IV

For effect and precision, the consciousness of chironomy
began at 350 or 365.
Uniting gently the brilliant cerise nail of the index
with the thumb.
Not the hands of a surgeon however,
unless muddied.
While in the garden a PATTERN of light – you, still and looking
intently at the left hand. This hand
holding everything below the colour. Idle.
Evening coming and the
wind amongst tulips and fur.

A settled
butterfly
HAND V

GOVERNENCE, DETAIL, ERROR, DISPLAY, TACT

The hand is not domiciled long.
The hand pirouettes.

A precise finger set in a point position–
the trailing voice of memory.

The hand walking the city under a sheet.
There is no street light.
There is no such thing as the hand.
This is known. There are
things held.
They descend upon, toward.
At times, setting out.
A million times we call movement.

Where is the castle of the hand?

Cuffed with gills.
Lace circling the inner city.
A bird seated on the palm
watching embers smoulder.

The palm of the
left hand
extended toward
the flames.
Six bowls on the
table. Handing
over a white gift.
A visit. Various
baskets hanging

An attentive engagement with the exterior
and pale skies (or shadow).
Yellow erases the recent past.

You touch the curtain.
ANIMAL VI

A GRAND place of letting go.
This is a museum.
Hunting the sun, its FUR,
for hours of thrill. The animals
finally idle from representation.

This plural and folded frontier
in the GARDEN
was only available to the body. Although
a second place which would replicate
was also present. A scene which traveled back to its departure.

Palm of the sun

ANIMAL VII

FIRST expression FIRST information FIRST abscission
No archive.

A FOREST closed to images of you.

FIRST PUBLIC.

The dog returned again and again. You were warm beside me and the dog was warm beside you. But this was not a body of extension, more a body which returned with the dog and was just as complex an arrangement.

This inattention was initially historical. You PATTED him again and he was dry to the touch. A boy was mimicking him in another era. There was a shadow cast from one of the buildings in which nothing was visible. A here hidden from there.
The dog returned carrying
a greater definition
for something earlier, and our conversation
proceeded around a small frame.

HALL X

The everlasting accumulation.
Cinema CARRIES my
body to me as a warm seated middle.

A body of
tiny consistent actions –
the painter’s hand

watched by visitors
who applaud, sleep and
lay beneath defined trees and
green linen sheets.

I will meet you
just beyond the third arch.
I will ride with you
to the mountain.

The group
gathered on foot
and horseback. A
pale blue sky.
One man
pointing to the
centre. A yellow
cloak. A bridge
leading to

ANIMAL VIII

He dismounted
FURTHER up and lay
down his helmet,
looked up at the varmint (FUR) then fell asleep. Asleep.
Still, except for
a tiny sparrow’s heart drawing to it
places draped in living fur
or dropped things or things moving. Places and further places.

We observed the horse in all its continuity. We traced it, late. Our loses concealed with talk of another centre and how we would get there and how we would speak while there. Late and confused, the horse turned its body away. Further on the mud was resistant and we saw two paw prints left from the memory of the dog’s feet.

This vision was embroidered then hung for visitors to HALL X.

HALL X

The HALL has two doors, a woven rug and your cri de Coeur. Pigment,

what keeps you in the little things? Animal gravity?

Really, only the bits that stick are found and so we find so little.

Holding bouquets

HAND VI

This romance with visual approbation extends from floor to ceiling and wall to wall. We are barely conscious. “Hold still,” you tutor the weaker hand, which lies placidly beside the lake.

NOT TO BE wet nor gather before lunch in the green field
of saints and horses. By midafternoon the ornamental is independent and we follow EACH OTHER around the mountain.

Between arches where even the fabric did not reach the ground leaving bracken to grow.

The oldest rocks and their tales.

HALL X

ANIMAL IX


Silence grows through the winding passageways and the centre grows from the bottom up. No centre then, as such, due to clouds or celebrated errors retreating.

HAND VII

Several yards of folds shroud the third gesture, leaving all to agility, even nakedness. Bare walls or a pair of rendered soft feet. Shoes askance. Space under the arch.

You are photographed waving. Yellows too. Behind every local instance a desire to come into contact.

Skaters and hunters on a long line and these, a testimony to corridors, looking and looking. This is writing an unverifiable history by hand.
HALL X

Only two days.

The museum was founded on the prominence of mirrors. So this HALL, we assume, is part of a corresponding doubling. An ARCH leading out of the hall broaches unvisited spaces.

Train the assertion into a form and, whether lost or looking, let the viability of this journey not require more than itself. Seeing fields from high above, arms above your head, in your new black coat.

HAND VIII

The edge of the field holds the hand of the animal. Leading to the garden are three great strata of posies.

A CURRENT sun rising provides a replica of the trembling heard before naming. What should, within the poorer system, not be spoken of. The terms remove the hand from the fire and the hand from the fire.

Left is the dark blur of an after-image.
A stolen necklace.
The hand entered with
a utopian camera.

Collapsing
summit

An animal’s
skull. An
upturned jug. A
single flag and
upon a mountain,
a windmill.
Crows. Horses all
moving in the
same direction

HAND X

HAND IX

The hand makes two.
A beautiful resting and a beautiful letting go.
Each to each garden.
A reaching hand that holds the book
or its garden.

In the direction of the upper gestural levels,
on cue. The dog lay down
beside you and you stroked
the top of his head.

You smiled.
The seat was warm and the air fresh.
Under your palm, reason and GLORY.

ANIMAL X

There is a new
CARESS. Something.
Current sun.

The cogency of LIGHTS, two small rocks.
All the rocks remaining
unattached, settling in their place.

In the foreground he sleeps.
His eyes closed. A relief
of one paw is visible, you say,
if viewed closely. We both approach.
The reddish-brown accretion

settles upon the rug, dry
after his swim.

Arches. A woman sitting at
a rectangular table. A man
sitting at a round table. The five of
clubs. A candle, alight. Small
shadows to the

The hall is almost empty except
for us. Transitional motifs bellow and you
smile. There is something
new about this.

HAND X

And never having painted a waterfall,
this falling WATER –
pouring yourself
somewhere into a new halfway.

I see you pool
beneath the larger ARCH.

Finally, it is something open
to a different consideration and we continue. A ball
is thrown into the ocean
and he paddles out to fetch it. Wind
flecks the surface.

HALL X

The fracturing is only to make the ineffable space experiential.
But this is a primitive habit and whether it be blue or
stone or woven, the PLACE excises the object
and, as she said, “leaves us animal.”
The sone may be a universe tomorrow.
Wait until tomorrow to visit the garden.

She calls the dog over with a whistle
and it is early in this winter’s day
and the HALL is losing its war with singulars.
Upon a hill
he is sitting with all the perceptions we share
and she calls him down
to the shore
to explain his fibre. This winter’s day
where affection gives way to romance
and the hand closes
a thought.

The sound of rain performs
this soft bipedal hunt.
A wave
and another.

HAND XI

You make and make
and make and make
and make and make
and make and make
and make and make
and make and make and
make and make.

The multiple hand
of handicrafts, while sensing what is available,
borrows an unstable harmony
to steady itself.
You taste a spice.
Water in water.
A liminal
arras

Further on
a headless
ladder, too elegant
an animal
to herd. Fur draped
near to a muscled conflagration
of pink hues,

arms outstretched for mountains.

Close by, your limbs.
Sitting looking at these things
narrowly escape.
You climb up, I watch you,
to deliver your first strange and fatal interview.
The only human elements
are erosion and wonderment.
A tenderness
for your temporary limbs.
A holding stone.

ANIMAL XI

Mirrors will lose
their silver in the coming visits. Yellow VOLUMES
to conceal song.
Unnatural participations
to hide the invisible.
This
is a byproduct.
This
does not stop for memory
as we imagine. The marble
smoothed by process.
A bouquet of private
fevers. This HALL
erases and illuminates
others.
Where the total sun goes down, 
stairs either side, 
we watch without us. You rise to receive 
this horizon as 
you did recalling our prior 
display 
of 
animal articles.

A hole in the ice.  
Bare branches 
lined with snow. 
The evening 
crows alone. 
Faded verticals 
making a city in 
white. The high 
arches. The bare

HAND X

Into the yellow sun 
you burrow with your hand. A 
tremendous 
soaring aspect laid out 
to visit. The visitors bring a busy praise 
to your home. Rows 
of darkened windows 
behind each object and each object 
held to explain 
our departure. 

A sail tilted 
by tension and touching 
your perceiving, touching 
a cabinet of want. 

HAND X

Where I sleep.
The hand hung
upon an unsteady
leopard skin.
Not the writing hand.
Not the labour hand
or the feather.

Your hand.

HALL X

I am unsure if
the cloud in the top right corner
of that Conversion, as
you pointed out,
is painted well or not.

The eye of the woman with the blue veil
is both hungry and
weeping.

The seating area consists of four
blue velvet seats facing outwards
and forming a square.
Comfortable– a worn blue.
We sit next to each other
as does everything sit next to everything.

At each horizon is another.
At that one, another.
People and animals have gathered,
some visiting, some here to STAY.

You are sure we are FACING west.
Your certainty extends
to the third horizon, but
not beyond the animals.

ANIMAL XII

Horses gather around the dog. A first.
They choose not to
give anything. Mostly
you gather from sight
and their SIGHT.

The impression is one of homage. To unreadable books which can’t be seen beyond the foregrounded landscape. Hills frame the dog and an old bridge. The dog turns. As it does the horses begin to run.

The dog witnesses us as we are, solid and fragrant.

The fur preferment

The descending sun suspended at eyelevel; we pause to look for each other.

The eye of the dog looks back and we are reluctant to display our labour at this time. The eye shows fatigue moving towards love.

HAND XIII

A lion’s paw removed from the monster cauterised and now tethered from its body with an ornate gold cap. Held as a charm. Held beyond its continuity unsuccessfully. Fur.
HALL X

A seditious and modest entrance. 
You say, “Pictures participate 
in up and more and up.”
It’s a sun replicated 
not for speculation 
but to create possibilities of access.

Material is unthinkable 
prior to its accumulation. 
Shelving smaller particulars 
by how they sit in the world. 
You reach up 
and display, initially, a grid 
free of directions.

The probable alleviation while looking at old things. 
A history of tenderness. 
The witness.

The seating consists of four 
blue velvet seats facing out. 
A worn blue. 
People and animals have gathered.

HAND XIV

There was a returning 
both of the hall and towards the hall. 
New paths wound 
around the upper levels. 
The grass was wet. 
You waved across from 
the doorway and your other hand 
held a woolen glove.

And in your other hand 
all the things to be returned and returned to.

The dog lay down on the grass nearby 
and, still wet, 
curled towards its tail 
and closed its eyes.

Your other woolen glove poking out 
from your jacket pocket.
Daily we resisted finalising
the measurements and trajectories.
Sometimes it ran
diagonal to the flooring,
others to the shoreline. The ceiling,
curved along the meeting points,
was stable.

The visitors were busy tidying
particles which they
would later show to you and I. You commented
on the ceiling by saying,
“I could LIE below this,
close to the stone.
Close to the stone,
a lifetime.”

The yellow of the
cloak and the
yellow of the
rock. Bare feet. A
man on a horse
pointing to a
centre forming in
the mid-ground.
Spears and armor

ANIMAL XIII

The dog looks beyond the horses.
They gather in sight.
Browns and the colours
of rock.

Hills frame the dog
as it TURNS.
As it turns the horses begin to run
leaving their bodies
nearby.

We were incomplete and visible.
HALL X

You said this was the third
time that when passing over the decorated
marble down to level one
you saw irises and heard
things. I saw a white bust,
two mounds of snow and
a man in the light coloured shirt.

Clear verticals ascended from
the weight of the frame. A man with a hat,
another with folded arms.

The visitors gathered to depart.
The dog watched
something in the distance.

_________________________________________________

Supine on a
vertical

_________________________________________________

ANIMAL XIV

And out of a perceived need
to tidy, cleaners visited in shifts
throughout the evening.
You said, “The primary vulnerability
is the weakened knee,
seen.”

The dog carried something vital
over to where we were sitting
looking at a tower
rising up from a mislaid ocean.

The splash from the ball
finding the surface.

_________________________________________________

HAND XV

So few elements lay at angles
with rings. “Knit it one”
was etched on the bottle
you held up between
will and events
to see if a ball had fallen in.

The surface tilted, it
revealed only waves.
A long walk
back clasping
a stone selected.

HALL X

Keeping a secret gives freely
when it gives itself.
And there are similarities.
And as much as pure lateness
moves only a pack
fur describes this as such.

Awaiting the arrival of the interior. The
two of us
find out
the nakedness is ascribed.

Designs and designs. A shore.
Waves in waves.

A building on the
horizon bathed in
light. Sailing
ships pushed and
drawn away. The
mouth of a fish. A
curl of water.
Seabirds in the
ruddy sky turn

The
interactivity
You fish below the surface,
your pointing finger
still, awaits the twitching
that completes an arch.

A visited PLACE
telling otherwise.

Your hand arced, index finger extended.
This arc was mirrored,
thus complete.

Some of what was said held and some
let go, and some fell.
That is
what was said between us.
Fall and fall and fall.
A museum.

ANIMAL XV

This is a small thing
with a photograph of you on the cover
walking with a dog
along a beach
and looking at a row of paintings.
But still, we apologise more often than most,
as fluid things.

To make January be with us even more
and then around
and around – this animal arches in a field.

At the edge is where perception retreats.

HAND XVI

Pink was nowhere in
the marble but there were hands.
Being handed things you took two black stone feet,
or at least the future.

Where else does the history come close?
In the morning, that’s where
there is the most history.
Really you wanted animal eyes.
Then you could find my hand
next to you and point; when
those eyes looked at us.

Work and work and work
ten times a day. This you said to me.
It was snowing but good.
Good for you and good for me. The form was nice,
a smell of lilies.

ANIMAL XVI

The scent of lilies, exterior lilies,
did tell me you were nearby
and all the PRETTY frames (animals)
and through each one (CITY
window) you
could be seen walking
the dog.

You touch one hand with the other.
It is warm water.

Lantern and
solution

This is a testimony. Big flame. Music
of the small parts undone
and touching the undoing and each other. It
makes no sense to count
your touches
of the dog
because each one was newer than the last.

The sun on the beach,
dyed fabric to hang before the lion.
That hand in repose near the fur holding
a paw. That hand
holding. You
rose up from the seat where we held hands.
The hand draped.

You are asleep with gold things. Given a third, a compass finds you west of here. The mud you blessed to ease the melody and record your mix of three lakes. And then left this shored toleware relinquishing below an acclivity. A song of posy. A beautiful blue sky.

I remember only schemes and tickles everywhere.

HAND XVII

There is some display to quantify either side. There was a camera on the seat between us, on the blue, holding images of oil hands.

Taken by the hand of the hand for the hand to try and show something else.

What that was is what this is.

We returned again and you had snow on your collar.

ANIMAL XVII

Returning from the hunt we met the visitors midway. The dog ignored those nearby and continued down the path. As it walked its paws left impressions.
At the bottom of each was herringbone parquetry.
You said, “History.”

ANIMAL XVIII

It is a hallway
where a hand with jewels,
or a hand
that is firmly with the body, is the middle.

The middle is the place we gathered.
Sometimes you get here.

The dog then
looked at you privately.
The shape was irregular,
much like a stain in a piece of fabric.

You said your house was small
and leaked when rain fell.

Our bodies came into the hall to seek privacy,
so our labour could be seen.

This dog is the third of us. It keeps
your body here; you keep me here, with the dog too.
It keeps us from ever finishing this.

ANIMAL XIX

Mostly they were of a similar size.
You threw the ball and
when he returned with it
said to go to the rug.

There was a rock
now settled to one side.
It cast a small shadow
onto the more yellow areas
of the rug.

The dog’s leg and ear twitched.
While thoughtless
we continued to talk until he woke.

A waterfall began in folds.
A wet rock.

Penumbra
nouns

A rope from a window to the trigger of a trap.
Birds with red chests. Winter pairs. Bare trees.
A bridge across a frozen lake.
Houses empty of

HAND XVIII

Phrases of action arrive in the middle where silence is painted.

Silence, a cathedral where animals gather beneath the untouched hand.

The two of us not remembering, but trying. A portrait.

Sandy hair, blue eyes. The blue light coming in through the main entrance windows. No world so detailed.
HALL X

Such busy lines
encountered by bodies.

Through the open doorway
an older woman peering at herself in the space.
A market square in celebration
with visitors throwing

gestures in greens
and flourishes.

Gold inlay trimming the door frame
and an old man reading a book

both feet, together, on the ground.

This is plain
and in perspective.

ANIMAL XX

Horses walk slowly into the stable.
At the back straw is piled in
one corner. You swept it here as
detailed work.
Night approaches the wilderness
as the wilderness.

This is a trial in staying out.
“Who owns the wood?” you ask.
We watch from here
and you cross your leg
over towards me
as novelty. They say
lead them out towards
all of us.

We
do not oblige to divide.
It’s the one hall you cannot leave.
They are too reduced
to a considered essence
then mourned over lunch.

You do leave
and we follow up back
beneath a white bust.
Hunting amongst
fragments it is the fur
which moves us. Seen edges
are forgotten when on the table.

Getting lost in the peace
of urgency.
This whole thing a faceless hall.
HAND XIX

Rubbing up against our vision,
you edited and I edited
and the remainder
set alight. Red wine placing
a nature of pale garnet
in the persistence of our vision on the back of the right hand.

To see clues
of fantasy as the condition
of this – it is the
density which may serve
for direction. Whether a path,
skyline or herd being rearranged
by hand.
The distance is removed by memory.

ANIMAL XXI

Just to watch the difference
to distinguish
as a preservation of borders.
The law of fierceness.

A path of fortune
curves through time and
abstracted buildings. Colour and
colour and colour.

What it is is again and again,
a sub-category of smallness.
The intersection
cannot be disassembled without
the sky. Under this
the dog looks to the left
and sees another dog.
We are not alone or sacred.

A black and
white cow looks
out. Bellow, a
river. A single
black bird on a
branch. The cows
driven along in
the direction of
the river. Six men

HAND XX

The hand is a product of time.
A barking in the distance
is HEARD. There is an object
which one day will be here too.
Holding hands –
the invisible burden of access
in our touch.

It is FINE TO set off
into volume and Spring and everything. Perception,
it’s said, is a stable volume of perspective, wolfsbane and pale space.

While near the clouds there is an independence circling the exterior.

HAND XXI

On the palm you push similar things into indifference. More grounded as rocks, as strong concerns. A hill replenished by a wave, a return.

We hold hands and the touch of touch is made by the untouched. What we see proceeds us and we arrive.

No aim to transcend. To copy and erase. Holding hands.

Not two but reality

The hybrid space has no beginning or end. We sit to one side. The dog lies in the centre, asleep. It wakes shakes off a light layer of snow.

We join the visitors and move between the vertical layers changing forms and views. Fur returns onto our one skin and there, both before and after, is a splash.

He paddles out to fetch the ball.
ANIMAL XXII

Included in this version of space there are names.
Reaching and holding and pushing.
The dog touches coexistence and walks to the shoreline.

Paw prints in the soft wet sand and a curled wave and another watching more than we see. A lineage framed by stable things of colour. Blue and green stable fields. You move closer.

A white flowering plant growing from a jug hanging from a tree. A key, swinging. Dancing and holding hands. A tall unpainted

Restraints of decoration are relative. Progressing through, adequate areas for relaxation were given places. We had thoughts we could not own.

A glass roof fragile under a heavy snow and light falling in. An irregular and uniform sequence bringing things together things that do not go together.

But our eyes ascend, descend and traverse and portraits grow regardless.
ANIMAL XXIII

A man kneeling expectantly.
His palms are pressed together and his sandled feet
exposed. He is thin
but not gaunt. He has brown hair.
His robes are corpulent in their colours
yet modest. A small short-haired brown and white
dog sits nearby, its head turned
towards rays of light descending
from the clouds. One

of the dog’s paws is rendered poorly
or is ill-defined due to the presence of a small rock
of similar colour
beside it. This is not obvious
from a glance. “Only if you look closely,”
you said.

HAND XXII

To LIGHT a
city. Looking is your subject.

Senses IN the
light towards but
if this, then you.
Looking is a primary
history.

WHAT we
have lost in the anticipation;
well shaped things we could then see
but not always name.
Gold comes when
listening out
for the mountains to come and be closer.
Holding my hand, the one
with rings.

Your achievements are sometimes
small vertical fibres
but the museum is HEROINE
and your place too.
Handed down
and down

A little bit of what was expected
and the pointing
is at nothing invisible.
Withdrawing to show more clearly
this thing and that.

The seats in the centre still a
worn blue and still receiving.
The warmth of the walls.
Overdoor busts with white collars,
look across at each other.

The turned legs of the seats,
thirty-two in total in this one room.
Two disappearances
you knew about and recorded
that later appeared in rendered sections
laid perfectly to support
a grounding document.

Visible from outside
is a collection.

ANIMAL XXIV

Proximity to the decisive moment
was shielded by horses.
Their limbs
and solid bodies
mirrored their portrayal
and you, casually,
sat down and looked closely
at the visitors. Some
were alone.

A performance was layered upon another
so that
motion began to sway the grass
and the legs began to
move and you tapped your foot.
These things
were so vital.

The essential oubliette
was installed to protect the body
from its boundary.

HALL X

HAND XXIII

If it was delivered firsthand
and the delivery was released swiftly
to then receive another –
the hand’s periodicity
a breath-essential.

And your hand
lifted, with no movement,
out of the fur
a series of hall and other spaces.
Your warm, warm hand

releasing unwavering
things. Yellows and rocks
in advance of postcards.

ANIMAL XXV

An idyll rendered warmly
in summer. Animals eat
without commotion while
over the proud trees
an effusion with no edges.

Wandering eyes secreted by lids
and a pleasant sea air
circling between and through them.
We are touched by rising things,
things that climb through and out of us.

Water
assembled
A circular hole in the ice. A bird with a red chest. Plains. Leafless branches filling the sky. Games being played. A wooden door lain down at an angle

HAND XXIV

The space of words is this place. A dog, as mentioned, carrying a wave at a time into the hand. No labour borne in viewing—assisted and placed.

Grand fur damp upon the dry centre. A twitch of the line to the sail. A ball arcing in the direction of motion where it will be plucked from the surface.

Wet waves rolling you visible.

Recalling the sets of stairs you fielded evidence for landings and exit points. Images arrive and arrive prior. A loaded pigment of little lines of destiny. Foretelling strange transitions.

First snow, known. A romantic indecision.
A copula ball.
All boundaries are subject to seasons.

ANIMAL XXVI

Horses gather in twos
below the window. Above
the window a
brooding sky sends
down electricity.

There are further arrangements
required to settle
the smaller facts. Fur
to dry and cages to
bait with questions.

The horses watch the dry road.
Dirt is blown up.
A pond nearby surrounded
by grass. A
fish near the surface.

HALL X

And when returning,
now for a new time
the cross breeze
travelled to you. SEVERAL
times you gazed
and many more the dog visited your memory.

BUILDINGS are continuous.
They are prior to horizons.
Returning and finding
you turning your head
towards the silence.

We sit back and watch him sleep.
Nothing is carried and nothing is gathered. In the foreground a hand APPEARS to be still.

HAND XXV

To the side of a clay jug, the rim catching all of the light. Curls and curves and decorations. From the lip, water swarms falling.

Beside, you clasp a leaf or cloth. Only your thumb and middle finger unholding. The knuckles soft and careful.

The third door into the outer rim was always open. You viewed particulars as grasping things waiting. Born into a kind place as fur.

Companions who never spoke but carried speaking to you. Fine, fine hairs holding up grand structures of sound. Invisible journeys aided by silence and the dog who now walked towards you, SOVERIGN of the unavowed pair. You gather lines and curves to share the framed leap out of now. A ball moves around another ball. Diagonals lower below sight and we sit back into space.
ANIMAL XXVII

Hybrid social gatherings of rules are ignored. A space of pure generality in which animals are taught to tell the time.

Gaps

inhabit our solidity and we name them and hold them close.

Fur lines atmospheres.

Do not imitate stability when a small thing that is not you touches you.

Leaning closer to the third is grander than a centre. An arching
dog relaxes before us.

You whistle it over and while its looking at you close your eyes.

HAND XXVI

An emerald cased in gold sitting upon an empty glove.

Waves of lace hover. In the darkness bold moments gather.

Fissures of seeing and grids of memory recoil. Releasing a seed which rises.
Held line dissolve.
Simple shifts.
Marbled footsteps.

Levels in
three of making

Furthest from considered marks
a floor with arched passages. VELVET,
even blues– plains of you.
Sections halved by windows
and gold, cornflower, ladders and
embroidered invisibles.

Portrayals depart to gather a family
lost in play. IDEA beside idea similar yards of love.

Eight seats watching all the suns rise
and re-rise. Hand touching hand touching
mislaying. YOU ease
peculiar slides over to
recall a tender instant.

Entering this frame, a
thin distance to sundown.

ANIMAL XXVIII

Releasing all simples of spanning kinds.
Water lapping privacy.
The dog’s paw.

A coastline with
ships tilted over.
Smoke from a
chimney. A man
up a ladder
repairing a house.
Two    castles.
Waves. Snow on
the    upper
The Narrow Interior of the Shore

Introduction

At aged ten or eleven I came across an image of Man Ray’s, *Indestructible Object*. This sculptural work consists of a cutout black and white photograph of a woman’s eye attached to the pendulum of a metronome. After seeing it I was frightened, confused, then intrigued and finally captivated. What appealed to me was its problematic subjectivity (Man Ray considered the work to be an emotionally evocative portrait), the disjunction it established between the human body and objects, its subversion of time and the confusing rubric it presented around time and movement. What struck me most was how two familiar objects, if removed from their everyday contexts and combined, could be transformed into a strange third thing, a monstrous thing,¹ which no longer sat so simply or easily in the world. This initial exposure to the power of strangeness, of conjunctions that are willfully difficult to understand but rich in association, had me captivated.

Black and white photography and artwork by artists who predominantly use text or a greyscale palette² continues to powerfully influence my writing, as do black and white films. Black and white images and ink on a page share something visually fundamental at a material level, I believe. Likewise, there are constraints to that materiality which they also share; black and white film cannot capture colour, nor can writing accurately and exhaustively represent the physical world ‘out there’. Viewing these surface and subterranean limitations figuratively, I imagine each possessing an aura of longing; that each wants to transcend its limitations but is unable to do so.³ This desire to go beyond

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¹ Monstrosity understood as the combination of two disparate things, traditionally parts of animals.
² For example, work by English artist Fiona Banner and American artists Kara Walker and Christopher Wool. Also work by Piet Mondrian, especially *Composition 10 in Black and White (Pier and Ocean)*.
³ Peter Middleton explores the idea of longing in long poems various ways in his essay, “The Longing of the Long Poem,” *Jacket2*, last modified late 2010, http://jacketmagazine.com/40/middleton-long-poem.shtml. The idea of longing could also be read into Steve McCaffery’s analysis of referentiality. McCaffery writes, “[r]eference in language is a strategy of promise and postponement: It’s the thing that language never is, never can be, but to which language is always moving.” That is, it passes off “absence as a postponed presence.” Language could therefore be considered a medium always longing for something else (the referent). Steve McCaffery quoted in, “A Primer for the Gradual Understanding of Steve McCaffery,” Kent Richard Arthur Lewis, (Doctoral Thesis, University of Victoria, BC, 1997), 189.
or to exceed fascinates me when it comes to writing, as does strangeness, and I believe experimental poetry is uniquely placed to speak about both.¹

Firstly, this is because of its ongoing questioning of all the conventions we associate with writing, its subversion of conceptual categories and its use of language to affect rather than to communicate meaning. That it often promotes strangeness if compared to more traditional poetry, and can be considered a “generic hybrid,”² therefore adaptable, also places it in a unique position to address life’s more messy and complex matters. As Lyn Hejinian writes, poetry arises out of the failure of language “to match the world”.³ Experimental poetry also challenges formal, semantic and syntactic norms and requires a level of engagement and investment from the reader which prevents them from just seeking out and extracting meaning to the exclusion of other significant elements, such as its materiality. These seditious traits prevent the experimental poem from being easily tamed and provoke in the reader questions about language, themselves and reality. This provocation aims to be generative rather than destructive and in today’s tidy, tamed and marketable reality such a goal is incredibly important. Susan Sontag’s attempt to free the art work from the strangle hold of interpretation and her call to action could just as easily be applied to poetry.

Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities. In a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability, interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art. Even more. It is the revenge of the intellect upon the world. To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world—in order to set up a shadow world of “meanings.” It is to turn the world into this world. (“This world”! As if there were any other.) The world, our world, is depleted, impoverished enough. Away with all duplicates of it, until we again experience more immediately what we have.⁴

_The Narrow Interior of the Shore_ grew out of a love for, and fascination with, poetry that is fractured and disjunctive (as is Man Ray’s troubling work), where time is discontinuous and subjectivity is at risk; poetry that is open and uses disruptive techniques to provoke the reader to other, less obvious,

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meanings, is inconclusive, and appears and reads as odd or ill-formed. It also grew out of another fascination which I date to my encounter with *Indestructible Object*, a fascination with perception, particularly visual perception. The interplay and tensions between looking and reading or visual and linguistic perception, which certain experimental poems make obvious, interests me. This interplay is effectively one between a visual sign (ink or pixels) and a non-visual concept (meaning). Traditionally it is believed the latter holds the most value and is of greatest use to the reader and the former is only useful as a vehicle for this value (meaning). This hierarchy is one of the many questioned and rejected by experimental poets, hence the painterly, graphic nature of my poem.

*The Narrow Interior of the Shore*, especially Part One (*Where I find myself or, when I arrived*), is an investigation into visual perception, observation and the translation of visual or non-linguistic content into writing. This investigation is of poetic and theoretical interest to me and also of great personal interest and value¹ as I have no ability to voluntarily produce mental images, recall sensory content or experience such content while reading. In June 2016 I discovered I have Aphantasia. This condition prevents me from seeing, hearing, smelling, touching or feeling anything via my mind’s eye. The only thing I can access, other than sensory information in the present moment, is a continuous, silent monologue. This discovery changed my whole view of reality, memory, reading and language. It also explained why I find descriptive passages in books dull and have difficulty remembering whole narratives rather than just fragments and details. For me, language is always abstracted from sensory content despite my having knowledge of sensory information. The latter is made up of just words.

My investigation involved carrying out a rudimentary experiment on a film using a simple phenomenological methodology.² I chose a film (*Letter from an Unknown Woman*) because I wanted a moving, tidy and controlled medium³ depicting a logically consistent, fictional world. This world

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¹ There is a growing number of writers carrying out literary or filmic autobiographical investigations to try to discover the influences books and films have had on shaping their identities. While my approach focussed solely on surface observations, as opposed to narrative and characters, there are certain similarities. See Samantha Ellis’ *How To Be a Heroine*, and Geoff Dyer’s *Zona*, for examples.

² While my basic understanding of phenomenology provided me with a useful conceptual framework to think through and does influence my poetics, the method I used to gather data in *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*, is limited to visual information only. It is a literal description of the ‘surface’ of a film and would best be considered as data for possible phenomenological analysis rather than a methodology.

³ “In other words, in the realm of cinema, the phenomenal field that the viewer perceives is, in essence, controlled by the filmmaker. In normal perception, it is the subject who directs his gaze upon specific percepts within the phenomenal field… There is no horizon, or larger context, of which the images we see are a part; there is only the image on the screen – an image that is, in effect, cordoned off from the world by the filmmaker.”
also needed to be engaging, strange and provide me with a rich, layered, visual experience, given that I would have to watch it multiple times. It also needed to be one I could pause, slow down and return to repeatedly, hence my not drawing on reality. In order to isolate my visual and auditory perceptions I needed a procedure that would prevent, where possible, my including anything other than these perceptions. I decided early on to limit myself solely to witnessing and recording and to avoid ‘reading’ the film to accumulate meaning, analyse or understand. A more detailed explanation of Where I find myself or, when I arrived is provided below.

Since the early 1970s and beginning with the L=A=N=G=E poets, there has been a renewed interest in experimental poetry as a more philosophically and socially responsible, and interesting way of producing and thinking about poetry, compared to traditional lyric poetry or what Charles Bernstein calls “official verse culture”. Since that time there has been ongoing criticism of the lyric, especially its reliance on a unified, stable speaking subject (which post modernism rejected as a legacy of a problematic humanism) and the belief that language is a politically neutral, transparent window on reality that does not shape nor effect that reality. Just as the importance of the lyric was reevaluated by Romantic poets in the late 18th Century, the social context in America in the 1970s led to its being reevaluated again, which resulted in new forms of poetry designed to address the lyric’s problematic ideological foundations.

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1 Additional reasons for my choice of film, and some possible issues relating to it, are provided later in the exegesis.

2 While problematic in the context of Where I find myself or, when I arrived because of its relatively innocuous subject matter and the fact that the content is fictional, I am none the less interested in a poetics of witness. By presenting my transcriptions I am effectively offering the reader the opportunity to witness my viewing of a film. This will be discussed later in the exegesis.

3 “[O]fficial verse culture of the last 25 years has engaged in militant (that is to say ungenerously uniformitarian) campaigns to “restrict the subversive, independent-of-things nature of language” in the name of the common voice, clarity, sincerity, or directness of the poem, & specifically in the highly problematic equating… of the “irrational” & the “artificial.”’” Charles Bernstein, “Artifice of Absorption” in A Poetics (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), 46.

4 Jonathan Culler asserts the reevaluation of lyric poetry in the late 18th Century occurred because a “more robust conception of the individual subject made it possible to think of the lyric as mimetic.” Jonathan Culler, “Theory of the Lyric,” Chats in the Stacks. (Lecture presented at Cornell University Library, New York, 7 October, 2015) https://media.library.cornell.edu/media/Jonathan+CullerA+Theory+of+the+Lyric/1_jg64h4us/3536661. Another shift in how the individual was understood in 1970s America could also be offered as what led to the rejection of the lyric.

5 For example, a restrictive, exclusionary understanding of humanity or the extreme individualism which neo-liberal ideologies are reliant on.
Beginning around 2003 and growing out of similar and new concerns, a group of writers, mainly in America, began producing works which have come to be known as ‘conceptual writing’. These writers privilege the concept over the articulation of that concept, as writing, and attempt to further exclude the lyric subject while questioning dominant, conventional poetic practices by:

employ[ing] intentionally self and ego effacing tactics using uncreativity, unoriginality, illegibility, appropriation, plagiarism, fraud, theft, and falsification as its precepts; information management, word processing, databasing, and extreme process as its methodologies; and boredom, valuelessness, and nutritionlessness as its ethos.¹

Conceptual writers assert that an ‘uncreative’ approach more accurately reflects our current digital age and the effect the internet has had on our understanding of ourselves and language. It also opens new possibilities for creativity and poetic approaches. More recently a new generation of writers is emerging, and as “conceptual writing has broadened from a coterie venture to a more general period tendency, the intensity and rigour of its anti-lyrical bias has also lessened.”² These new approaches to the lyric have been termed ‘conceptual’, ‘postmodern’ and ‘radical’ and all attempt to utilise what is of value within the lyric while also embracing the lyric subject no longer as a detached, unified individual, but as a situated, fractured, embodied member of a community.

While I do not share conceptual writing’s ethos, I did turn to this style of writing, and to art, for a suitable procedure to produce long, flat, descriptive texts based on observation, or more scientifically, as a method for generating and recording perceptual data. Here I found, then modified, Kenneth Goldsmith’s Fidget and Fiona Banner’s The Nam. Goldsmith explains his work as such: “Fidget's premise was to record every move my body made on June 16, 1997 (Bloomsday). I attached a microphone to my body and spoke every movement from 10:00 AM, when I woke up, to 11:00 PM, when I went to sleep. I was alone all day in my apartment and didn't answer the phone, go on errands, etc. I just observed my body and spoke.” Banner’s ‘still film’³ The Nam was created by assembling detailed transcriptions of six Vietnam films (Full Metal Jacket, The Deer Hunter, Apocalypse Now, Born on the Fourth of July, Hamburger Hill and Platoon) into a 1000 page book. These two examples

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provided an interesting pairing in that each works off very different, yet temporally constrained, source material. Banner’s work has the added benefit of addressing the interplay between looking and reading, even going so far as to inhibit our ability to do one or the other.

For The Narrow Interior of the Shore I also needed a poetic form that was adaptable, able to incorporate lengthy transcriptions and other types of writing if required. It also needed to provide sufficient additional space to experiment and to effectively frame thematically and stylistically divergent material into a single work. Shorter forms would not provide the space to do this, and a more formalist approach would not give me the flexibility to experiment. Neither would allow for lengthy transcriptions. Additionally, I did not want to draw conclusions within the work, nor assert anything with unflinching clarity. The form and my approach needed to be open.

I also wanted to experiment with aspects of the lyric in Part Two (Where I find you or, the shore). I therefore decided to write a long poem.

Despite criticisms of the lyric form and due to its definitional precariousness, poets are now utilising its non-expressiveness elements in their work, such as its aesthetics, its themes, its conciseness and its musicality. It has even been argued that the textual fracturing in work by a poet like Susan Howe can be viewed as having a lyric sensibility. Lisa Sewell has the form’s complexity in mind when she

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1 “To experience Banner’s art is thus to engage at a visceral, disarmed level with the basic processes of looking and seeing. Within these processes, “reading” is a sub-strand of activity, yet exists with parity to the broader issues of observation and scrutiny. In one sense, Banner presents the viewer with a philosophical endeavour: to correlate the relationships between looking and seeing, and between sign and meaning.” Michael Bracewell, “Life Writing,” in Performance Nude: Fiona Banner (London: Other Criteria, 2009), 5-6.

2 Nancy Princenthal argues Banner’s text works are often unreadable because they “lack paragraph breaks… the lines are so long and there is so little space between one and the next.” The image of a block of text therefore prohibits access to meaning, and “acuity flags and meaning falters.” “Prolix: Fiona Banner’s Word Works,” Art on Paper 4 no. 5 (2000): 40. Michel Foucault makes a related observation, however in the opposite direction, when writing about Apollinaire’s Calligrammes; “As soon as it begins to do so, to speak and convey meaning, the bird has already flown, the rain has evaporated”. This is Not a Pipe, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 24.


4 Many poets use the term “open” when talking about experimental or anti-lyric poetry. Lyn Hejinian provides a useful definition in her essay “The Rejection of Closure”. The open text is “open to the world and particularly to the reader. It invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies…. It often emphasizes or foregrounds process, either the process of the original composition or of subsequent compositions by readers, and thus resists the cultural tendencies that seek to identify and fix material and turn it into a product; that is, it resists reduction and commodification.” The Language of Inquiry, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 43.

5 “Lyric writing after modernism can be explained by neither an approximation to song; nor brevity; nor the continuity of the lyric subject; nor a passionate, intimate, or even private register. Yet traces of all these features, whether
writes, “[W]hile a poetics of utter sincerity and authenticity is less and less the standard, the lyric is by no means exhausted.”¹ For me, rather than adopting an expressive poetics in Where I find you or, the shore, I chose to draw on other lyric elements, such as the sounds of words and lines, and take an investigative approach and adopt a “practice of coming to the world without certainty, but rather with curiosity, unbelonging to an established ordering, an openness to ambiguity and the unfinished…even the untried.”²

The long poems of T.S. Elliot, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Charles Olsen and Louis Zukofsky were my first introduction to the form and its associated poetics. I was drawn to the scale and socio-historical breadth and complexity of these longer works, their innovative and experimental uses of language, the strangeness of the language and their attention to the materiality of the text and the page as a visual space. I also admired their intent to ‘make it new’, as Pound declared, and develop a poetry which would be able to capture and convey the rapid changes going on in America and the West at the time.³ I was also inspired by the force with which these poets rebelled against the Romantic lyric tradition they had inherited, with its idealism, preoccupation with emotionality and nature, and its unified, stable expressive subject. If one were to describe the longer works of the poets above simply, the word ‘fractured’ would certainly have to be used. For these poets, there was no longer anything stable or unified following the horrors of the First World War.

Given The Narrow Interior of the Shore is primarily a creative project and definitions of the lyric and experimental long poem are reviewed and reformulated regularly, I am not going to attempt an exhaustive definition. For my purposes, I will take the lyric in its contemporary setting, with its associated assumptions, to be a form which is comparatively short, concise and offers “statements

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² Kathleen Fraser borrows the term ‘investigation’ from Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations to explain her own poetic practice. Shepherd, Reginald. ed., Lyric Postmodernisms: An Anthology of Contemporary Innovative Poetries, (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 50. Lyn Hejinian’s idea of poetry as a “language of inquiry” is also useful to consider in this context.
³ It could be argued the desire to create (and legitimate) new poetic forms is an American preoccupation. As Stephen Fredman writes in 20th Century American Poetry, “In every generation, starting with Emerson, American poets exhibit an anxious need to invent American poetry, as though it had never existed before. This very need to invent, to attempt a new cultural grounding, has become one of the hallmarks of the poetry, which is always trying to explain itself to readers or trying to find analogies to other cultural practices that will grant it legitimacy.” A Concise Companion to Twentieth-century American Poetry, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 3.
with real illocutionary force, seeking to persuade listeners to take a particular view of an issue or problem”. 1 Additionally, it “aims to be an event, not a representation of an event, and sound is what happens in lyric: sound becoming patterned…,” 2 that is, it is “rhythmic”. It is also “ritualistic” and it is this characteristic which “which animates lyric’s rhythms and its structure of address, and which gives lyric the authority to bestow praise, lay blame, and tell the truth.” 3 Additionally its underlying structure is “one of triangulated address, where an audience of readers is addressed through the act of address (implicit or explicit) to an imagined addressee.” 4 It is also hyperbolic, self-contained, well-wrought and interpretable. In contrast, experimental long poems are firstly, long. They are also, as Lynn Keller writes, “poems that deliberately disrupt conventions of ordinary and poetic language – of grammar, syntax, punctuation, of representation and narrative, of lineation, persona, imagery, of intelligibility itself” 5 as well as being generically hybrid. 6 Their approach to time is also different in that the lyric wants time to be “contained, arrested, held, stopped, summed up, to become “timeless’” 7 the long poem is “inflected… by an insistent confrontation with time itself, historical, personal, messy, with events and one’s responses becoming form”.

To expand on this comparison between the lyric and other forms so as to include conceptual writing, Marjorie Perloff writes: “When lyric is construed, as it has been since the Romantics, as the art of self-expression, of the private language of a subject overheard while engaged in meditation or intimate conversation with another, conceptualism would seem to be, by definition, its enemy, relying, as it so often does, on words not one’s own or submitting ordinary words to elaborate rules.” Perloff makes the claim, which will be discussed later, that many conceptual writers are now turning

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6 Rachel Blau DuPlessis, considering if it is possible to define the long poem as a genre in, “Considering the long poem: genre problems”, writes, “So there are as many generic traces in a long poem as there are genres one might consider. But if this is true of any genre, this finding, though quite suggestive for the contemporary long poem, cannot distinguish our genre particularly, except perhaps by more intense hybridity because of length.” Readings: Responses and Reactions to Poetries, Issue 4, Birkbeck, University of London, http://www.bbk.ac.uk/readings/issues/issue4/duplessis_on_Consideringthelongpoemgenreproblems.
back to the lyric and producing “free-associative and yet rule-generated lyric[s].” My poem partially situates itself within this shift and aims to:

[I]ntegrate the traditional lyric’s exploration of subjectivity and its discontents, the modernist grappling with questions of culture and history and language’s capacity to address and encompass those questions, and postmodernist scepticism toward grand narratives and the possibility of final answers or explanations, toward selfhood as a stable reference point, and toward language as a means by which to know the self of its world.

To familiarise myself with various approaches to the long poem and the diversity of their poetic, formal, social and political concerns, I examined James Merrill’s The Changing Light of Sandover; Bernadette Meyer’s Midwinter Day; A.R. Ammons’ Tape for the Turn of the Year; Diane di Prima’s Loba; John Ashbery’s, Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror and Girls on the Run; Alice Notley’s The Descent of Alette and Alma; or The Dead Woman; George Oppen’s serial long poem Of Being Numerous and Charles Reznikoff’s Testimony: The United States (1885-1915). Also Lyn Hejinian’s My Life; Kenneth Goldsmith’s Fidget and verse novels The Monkey's Mask and Wild Surmise by Dorothy Porter. The sheer variety and diversity across these works confirmed that a long poem was most suitable for my thesis. As Lynn Keller writes, “[i]ts multiplicity of traditions and precedent models is precisely what renders the long poem an attractive field of possibilities for such a diversity of contemporary poets.”

What became apparent looking at these works was that the long poem cannot be defined by a single form, therefore I needed to make significant decisions on how I wanted to organise the 20,000 words.

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3. Lynn Keller divides long poems produced between the 1920s and 1980s into three useful categories: those written in the early 1920s which form a reaction to the First World War and rejection of romantic poetry; those from the late 1950s to the early 1970s which highlight a reaction among younger poets against the restrictions of the lyric that dominated 1940s and 1950s American poetry; and those written after this when identity politics and politics in general were informing alliances amongst poets more so than agreed ideas about poetic form or language. “The Twentieth-Century Long Poem” in The Columbia History of American Poetry, Jay Parini, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 536-537.
4. John Ashbery’s, Girls on the Run, although focussed on a static medium (artwork by Henry Darger), provided a useful example of a connotatively descriptive long poem which foregrounds unexpected shifts and includes narrative elements that never seem to cohere or progress.
5. Although my lineation in the first transcription of Where I find myself or, when I arrived, is different from that in Dorothy Porter’s verse novels Wild Surmise and The Monkey’s Mask, they were helpful with respects to gaining a better understanding of the effects of lineation on narrative.
I intended to write. Given this volume could be off-putting to many readers, I chose to lyricise *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*, to craft elements within it, and also include a second part that would be experimental, loosely autobiographical, and draw on aspects of the lyric, particularly its focus on rhythm. My use of the two parts, and a variety of sectioning techniques within each, I decided would provide a sense of progression and cohesion and assist me in the writing. As Nerys Williams writes in *The Monstrosity of the Long Poem*, “rather than relying upon a construction that organises the writing around the perceptions of a single speaker or coherent story, contemporary poets use a variety of formal strategies to sustain the momentum of the long poem. Frequently the extended poem is divided into a sequence of individual chapters, a numerical structure of short lyrics, irregular verse cycles or collage sequences.”

Another challenge I faced structuring *The Narrow Interior of the Shore* was in connecting the two formally, stylistically and methodologically different parts into a single poem. I resolved to do this by including simple motifs and echoing these between the two parts, rather than drawing on more traditionally valued action, narrative development or a character’s psychology. I wanted tenuous links between details I observed in the film, often to do with the set, props, wardrobe, bodily movements or animals, and their now re-contextualised reappearance in *Where I find you or, the shore* rather than any deeper meaningful content. For example, a hand motif repeated throughout *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* (due to my observations of characters’ hands, where even a minor character may be attended to) reappears in *Where I find you or, the shore* as a series of portrait-like sections or fragments on hands based on autobiographical information, hands depicted in paintings, research and fictional elements.

The inclusion of additional material relating to motifs presented initially in *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* were based on the connotative approach to description used by Gertrude Stein in her literary portraits and *Tender Buttons* and by Francis Ponge, particularly in *Mute Objects of Expression* and *Unfinished Ode to Mud*. My use of portraiture in *Where I find you or, the shore* was intended to give depth or breadth to, for example, a repeated common noun in *Where I find myself or,

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when I arrived by providing what could be considered, supplementary particulars. However, these particulars (essentially more words), no matter how many were provided, while adding detail to a specific motif, merely highlighted that an object can never be truly exhausted in language. This instability of representation could even be traced back to perception itself. As Susan Howe writes in My Emily Dickenson, "Perception of an object means loosing and losing it."¹ There is therefore always a gap or loss present within a representation of something, however, by embracing this I sought to explore the process of representation while still believing in its impossibility. As Ponge writes in ‘Carnations’; “The carnations, for instance, defy language. I won’t rest till I have drawn together a few words that will compel anyone reading or hearing them to say: this has to do with something like a carnation.”² The supplementary particulars I included in Where I find you or, the shore were gleaned while living in Vienna for three months, independent research, conversations with Isabel and our numerous visits to the Picture Gallery at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.³

If Where I find myself or, when I arrived focused on perception and attempted to exclude anything more than perceptual data, Where I find you or, the shore took the opposite approach and, while still attentive to the investigative or descriptive mode, turned to consciousness for its content. If consciousness is a “field of composed at all times of a mass of present sensations, in a cloud of memories, emotions, concepts, etc … a much-at-once”⁴ my goal was to observe and describe this much-at-once coming-to-language, via memory, in contrast to my transcription of a comparatively tidy, visually rich, linear film. I wanted to explore strangeness, given my Aphantasia, by observing my own memories of a specific time and place that were only available to me as language. As Lyn Hejinian writes, “An evolving poetics of description is simultaneously and synonymously a poetics of scrutiny. It is description that raises scrutiny to consciousness. And in arguing for this I am proposing a poetry of consciousness, which is by its very nature a medium of strangeness.”⁵

¹ Susan Howe, My Emily Dickenson, (New York: New Directions, 2007), 104.
³ Both Isabel and myself have Aphantasia. We did not know this at the time but on reflection, our 15 to 20 visits to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, predicated for both of us on our “bad memories,” reveals a certain utility in repeating experiences, including perceptual experiences, to try to retain them. I also formalised this process as it related to my research by photographing hands in hundreds of paintings while there.
By scrutinising my time in Vienna, conversations with Isabel and our visits to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, along with additional research, I intended to move from the longing invoked in Where I find myself or, when I arrived to a sense of nostalgia.\(^1\) Again, a sense of loss. To provide myself with a real present, a now other than the actual writing, I drew on research into hands and animality. This research was carried out while writing Where I find you or, the shore, however, it drew on a range of sources I gathered and surveyed throughout the entire time of my studies. My drive was now not transcriptive or literal as it had been in Where I find myself or, when I arrived but generative and creative. To attempt the former with respect to my memories of my time in Vienna would have resulted in a very flat, emotionless list. My descriptions needed to proliferate and crystalise those recalled moments, not reduce them. Gertrude Stein’s and Francis Ponge’s approach to description provided me with a useful guide, as did Lyn Hejinian’s.

I propose description as a method of invention and of composition. Description, in my sense of the term, is phenomenal rather than epiphenomenal, original, with a marked tendency toward effecting isolation and displacement, that is toward objectifying all that’s described and making it strange.\(^2\)

This explanation of my method of composition for Where I find you or, the shore may appear vague or partial but this was precisely my aim, it was an investigation and a divergence from the restrictive pre-determined approach I adopted for Where I find myself or, when I arrived. I wanted gaps and discontinuities and leaps. As Rosmarie Waldrop writes; “…I love the way verse refuses to fill up all of the available space of the page, so that each line acknowledges what is not. I want to preserve this sense of a void and so must cultivate cuts, discontinuities, cracks, hitches, snags, leaps, shifts of reference, and emptiness inside the semantic dimension and inside the sentence.”\(^3\) The scale and openness of the experimental long poem allowed for such an investigation while at the same time liberating me from the expectations relating to coherence, sense, tidiness or closure associated with

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1. By doing this I am doubling the notion of longing. One is a longing for the presence that representation and language are unable to provide and the other, for shared time with a close friend which cannot be re-experienced as it was.


other genres. It was the excessive quality of the long poem I also wanted to utilise along with its acceptance of messiness and even flaws. These flaws can even be considered a more honest reflection of how life actually is. As Rachel Blau Du Plessis writes, quoting Alice Notley on Anne Waldman, “Parts of the [Waldman] poem may feel thin; I think that is built into the genre, parts of *Maximus, Paterson* and *The Cantos* feel a little thin to me – as well as garrulous, cornpone, flowery, forced, self-indulgent, pretentious, and impenetrable. The form makes flaws possible; possibly poetry should make room for flaws, being a human form.”

What follows are detailed explanations of *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* and *Where I find you or, the shore*. Each begins with two epigraphs. While there may be an expectation for me to explain or contextualise these quotes, I am reminded of something Isabel said on one of our visits to the museum. While looking at a painting she remarked, “I really like this painting. It took me years to know why.” In the spirit of this comment I will let the epitaphs be. In the spirit of the materiality of the text and the page as a visual site, the two creative parts of my thesis are rendered using single line spacing. I do not intend to offer a close reading of these parts in this exegesis, but to provide context, influences, theoretical frameworks, methodologies and further areas for exploration. This effectively constitutes a personal examination into a developing poetic, not an exhaustive analysis.

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1. Peter Middleton discusses the difficulty in ending or concluding long poems. He writes, “however exhausted the poet and the form, these poems don’t want to end. They long for more”. The contemporary long poem avoids this problem, he claims, by ending “with as little conclusivity as possible.” “The Longing of the Long Poem,” *Jacket2*, last modified late 2010, http://jacketmagazine.com/40/middleton-long-poem.shtml.

2. “Long poems...are like short stories, excess to requirements, a wilderness of weeds outside the garden, a heterogeneous field that does not lend itself to definition, and frequently take advantage of this absence of expectation of any defining characteristic.” Peter Middleton, “The Longing of the Long Poem,” *Jacket2*, last modified late 2010, http://jacketmagazine.com/40/middleton-long-poem.shtml.

Where I find myself or, when I arrived

To you, who have never known me.

– Lisa Berndl, *Letter from an Unknown Woman.*¹

Any statement I issue,
if particular enough,

will prove
I was here

– Rae Armantrout²

*Where I find myself or, when I arrived* consists of two transcriptions of the black and white melodrama, *Letter from an Unknown Woman.* The film, produced in 1948 and set in fin de siècle Vienna, is based on a novella of the same name by Stefan Zweig. It is a story of unrequited love and longing set in a “bygone world represented as an elegant fantasy”³ involving a pianist,⁴ Stefan Brand, who receives a letter from the ‘unknown woman’, Lisa Berndl. As Stefan prepares to leave Vienna one evening, the letter arrives. In it Lisa confesses her unrequited love and as he reads the film flashes back to Lisa as a young girl when Stefan is her neighbour. Her girlish obsession with the self-obsessed, successful musician eventually leads to a brief romantic encounter after which he leaves, promising to return. He doesn’t return. Lisa eventually marries another man after discovering she is pregnant with Stefan's child and then, years later, they accidently meet again. Stefan doesn't recognise her and tries unsuccessfully to seduce her. Upon finishing the letter, which also includes photographs of their son, Stefan remembers who Lisa is and wants to see her. By this time however, both her and the boy have died from typhus.

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⁴ Stefan is actually a writer in the novella. *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* focuses solely on the film adaptation of this story and does not attempt to examine or critique the differences between the two, nor evaluate the theoretical position of adaptations in general.
The first transcription of the film adopts a modified version of the ‘writing through’ method artist Fiona Banner’s used in her work, *The Nam*. This involved watching the film, describing my observations, and recording these with a dictaphone. During this process I restricted myself to the surface or perceptual layer of the film only. I was reliant only on my vision and hearing. This data I then wrote up, attending to poetic devices such as lineation, rhythm, alliteration and repetition where possible. The transcription, therefore, effectively merged content obtained via a procedural methodology with a set of more poetic concerns. It was later also edited with these and other conceptual and poetic concerns in mind.

This transcription was also divided into sections of varying lengths, containing irregular stanzas, with each section numbered using a lower case roman numeral. It was intended the numbers would provide a sense of progression, an attention to temporality and the presence of an authorial intent to order and arrange. These sections, however, were not predicated on anything specific to the film, but rather on a lull in action or my attention, or some other prompt that came to me while watching the film. Consequently, these sections do not accurately map scenes in the film. If viewed/read next to each other what would appear is a misalignment between the structure of the film and the structure of the transcription. This differentiates my work from any obvious comparison with the screenplay, while at the same time, mimics the play in poetry between the line break and the sentence. In my work the film’s scenes function as the sentence does in poetry, while the sections of the transcription/poem function as line breaks, cutting across scenes.

My transcription also flattens the temporal complexity of the film, with its numerous flashbacks and at times, conflation of past and present, by rendering almost everything in the simple present. This, coupled with my seeming unwillingness to provide any depth to the characters or action, let alone

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1 Kenneth Goldsmith and Craig Dworkin borrow this concept from John Cage to describe Banner’s process. “Banner was literally writing through (to use John Cage’s term) pop culture and media. The text makes no distinction between films or scenes, instead creating an epic, nonstop onslaught of language.” *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 60. Cage’s ‘writing through’ procedure, however, designates a deterministic procedure which strives to reduce intention but also reduce a text’s length to a “reasonable musical length.” Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Conversing with Cage: John Cage on His World and His Work* (London: Omnibus Press, 1981), 150. This idea of using a procedure to reduce content for a secondary purpose echoes the loss inherent in both representation and transcription.

sympathise with the tragic predicament Lisa finds herself in, may not only make the reader skeptical of my procedure, but may also mystify them as to why I have transcribed this film in the first place; and not once, but twice.\(^1\) The simple present also evokes an atmosphere of habitual action whereby, in the absence of any psychology, these actions shift from constituting events to becoming markers of identity. As Jonathan Culler writes about the use of the present simple in the lyric using Phillip Larkin’s “This Be The Verse” as an example.

“This is not a statement relativized to a fictional speaker or about a fictional world but a straightforward declaration, as a truth about our world. Quite a lot of poems in the present tense fit this model, and closely related are poems which state an occurrence that is so habitual as to become not an event but an identity statement.”

“[T]here is no speaker-observer here whose perspective and motivation we must reconstruct but evocation of a condition that is not timeless exactly—not like Water boils at 100 degrees centigrade—but mysteriously iterable, like a film loop that keeps running, as the action takes on a mythical quality.”\(^2\)

The almost total absence of adverbs in the transcription also leaves the characters’ actions, especially walking, which is the most commonly observed action, perfunctory and unfinished. The use of the active voice throughout, in the absence of explicit motivations or objectives for actions, further emphasises this unfinished quality. The reader is given trajectories but, to some degree, they are inherently unstable. This instability of the transcribed world is further compounded at the level of objects (sets, props, wardrobe) because of the absence of identifying descriptions for named objects. For example, is the white rose mentioned on more than one occasion the same white rose each time? In the film it is not, yet in the transcription, in the absence of any temporal or qualitative defining characteristics or context, we are unsure. The present simple in Where I find myself or, when I arrived appears to threaten the continued existence of both objects and characters. This idea of continuous existence will be further explored in Where I find you or, the shore.

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1 Paul James makes a similar observation when writing about a collaboration I worked on with photographer Fiona Amundsen. In that work, titled Into the International, I ‘mapped’ windows of housing estate buildings in two photographs by Amundsen with the word ‘window’. The resultant work consisted of two photographs and two word-maps. The latter featured mainly white space, a traced horizontal line and the word ‘window’ repeated. As James writes, “The blank spaces within the page coupled with the literalness of his “translation”, of Fiona’s photograph, inspire scepticism towards the ability of the poem to act as a representation of the photograph”. neue, TESTSTRIP Micrograph series, September 1999.

Unlike Banner, whose approach is informal, autobiographical and invasive to the surface of the film, I attempted to remove interpretation, speculation, judgement and any aspect of my personality from my transcriptions.¹ My aim was to be as neutral as possible and unlike Banner, transcribe only one movie but do this twice. Also, unlike Banner, I chose to give weight to, or make visible, specific elements within the film which are not usually noticed as significant without analysis and interpretation. I achieved this by focusing on lineation, repetition, alliteration, symbolism and word choice. My aim was to use poetic techniques to illuminate props, wardrobe, background action or hand gestures for example, rather than deeper, psychological matters. These illuminated elements I then re-presented in Where I Find you or, the shore, using them to form linkages between two stylistically, formally and methodologically different parts, and through this process, shift them from being unadorned concrete nouns, for example, into simple motifs. This embellishment however, would be evocative and oblique, akin to “a series of fragmented, tentative notes on a subject rather than [as] a definitive statement or exhaustive analysis.”²

In 1998 I experimented with a related transcriptive approach working from John Ford’s The Searchers. In a work entitled Western Compositions I mapped twenty scenes from the film to produce twenty pages of concrete poetry; one scene per page. The order of the pages matched the chronology of the film, however, the richness, movement and depth of each scene were frozen and reduced to, for example, one proper noun and three or four nouns standing in as props for objects and characters on the screen. Each page was given an oblique title which may or may not have provided additional depth to the ‘page scene’.³ To further reduce the text and at the same time maintain a sense of narrative, with its temporal and spatial continuity, the words ‘cowboy’ and ‘mountain’, appear on several pages. This reduction of a film into data devoid of interpretation is also apparent in my transcriptions of Letter from an Unknown Woman.

¹ Banner’s goes beyond just observing to include herself, or a viewing subject, within the film. For example, “Then I just think he’s waiting. He glances up through the blurring fan. Then he’s crouched down in the middle of the room, the fan’s beating away above him, but it, he, looks hot as shit. You see him from the top. I think you can hear some insects, or some kind of interference.” Fiona Banner, The Nam (London: Frith Street Books, 1997).

² This approach draws on that used by Francis Ponge as discussed by Andrew Epstein. Where I find you or, the shore, could be considered within the context of everyday aesthetics, however, a fictional everyday depicted in film. Perhaps films could be a practice area for focussed attending, a training ground for novelty and surprise? As Epstein writes; “They [Wallace Stevens and Francis Ponge] remain convinced that our ability to recognize and appreciate the actual and familiar is severely hampered by habit, received ideas, and encrusted metaphors.” “The Rhapsody of Things as They Are”: Stevens, Francis Ponge, and the Impossible Everyday,” Wallace Stevens Journal 36, no. 1, (2012), 56.

*Western Compositions* was also an attempt to minimise my own input into the work by avoiding lineation, vocabulary and typographic decisions, choosing instead to base them on a visual, non-linguistic medium and thus avoid any need for the former and use cinematography to determine the latter.\(^1\) In so doing I was foregrounding the materiality of words and preventing them from losing this materiality, through the process of reading, to meaning.\(^2\) Rather than using this approach to draw attention to the ubiquity of language in our daily lives, or promote a new way of reading, I wanted to illustrate how “[b]y mapping across semiotic systems I [was] making more apparent the sense of loss inherent in the act of representing.”\(^3\) I was also trying to promote a more considered and appreciative approach to concrete nouns.\(^4\)

After completing my first transcription of *Letter to an Unknown Woman*, I decided to do a second and possibly a third to see what variations, if any, arose. My intention was to set them on the page alongside each other to suggest a reworking from one to the other, and in keeping with what I have been discussing, foreground the materiality of the text and the page.\(^5\) The two texts also created a dialogue or exchange between two perceptual experiences of the same film while preventing each from being read at the same time. To read both, a field (white space) had to be traversed. I also wanted the two transcriptions to function as stagings, with the page becoming a constructed space which the reader entered into in order to (re)create the visual imagery and narrative of the film from the barest of elements. This space was also the space of my witnessing.

In the second transcription, I intended to further problematise my attempt to “map across semiotic systems” by outsourcing part of the labour necessary for the transcription. I expected this would allow

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1. Lineation is predetermined in a similar way in the second transcription due to the 35mm text box, justification and text wrapping.
2. “Words are no longer primarily transparent content carriers; now their material quality must be considered as well.” Paul James, *neue*, TESTSTRIP Micrograph series, 1999.
3. ibid.
4. This could be applied to the objects themselves. As Ponge writes, in defence of his style of writing: “What’s to be gained by this? To bring to life for the human spirit qualities, which are not beyond its capacity and which habit alone prevents it from adopting”. *Mute Objects of Expression*, Translated by Lee Fahnestock, (New York: archipelago books, 2008), 38.
5. I always encounter the page as a physical site when I am writing. It is a visual field which, as soon as I activate it with text, begins a dialogue between black and white, figure and ground. It is a special space. As Susan Howe describes it; “In poetry I am concerned with the space of the page apart from the words on it. I would say that the most beautiful thing of all is a page before the word interrupts it.”, “An interview with Susan Howe,” Lynn Keller. *Contemporary Literature* 36.1 (1995), 7.
me to pay extra attention to my observations by freeing me from the dull task of writing up a second transcription. I did this by using a voice-to-text app and adopting a standard 35mm text box with fully justified text-wrapping throughout. Again, I wanted to remain true to my observations of the film and record only what I saw and heard. To “testify” or “remain a witness” as Charles Reznikoff describes it when speaking about his work, *Testimony: The United States (1885-1915): Recitative*. I was also not wanting to “encode a series of paraphrasable truths as to enact immediacies of perception”.2

After trying repeatedly and using various methods to see the film differently from my initial transcription, I realised I was unable to alter my perceptual data aside from focusing on different aspects within the film; effectively, more of the same. I knew I didn’t want to include anything external to the world of the film such as lighting, camera work or editing techniques, nor significantly change my approach. As Auster says of Reiznkoff’s *Testimony*, “These poems are not trying to drum home universal truths, to impress the reader with the skill of their making, or to invoke ambiguities of human experience. Their aim, quite simply, is clarity.”3 I considered recording someone else’s observations and transcribing these or attempting to experience and dictate the film from a more embodied position as Vivian Sobchack does with Jane Campion’s *The Piano*. Eventually I decided to turn to technology and, as mentioned, outsource a part of my practice.

Using a free version of the voice-to-text app, *Dragon Dictation*, I proceeded to voice what I saw and record this. The free version however, only allowed me a few minutes at a time so I used this to determine breaks in the text. I then aligned the content of this transcription with that of the first. Consequently, sometimes the second one provided additional data to the first, or it echoed existing data directly. The most exciting discovery I made by outsourcing the writing up of my observations

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4. Vivian Sobchack argues that our bodies play a key role in making sense of films and our experience always emerges through our pre-reflective senses and bodies. This makes it possible, she claims, to experience filmic images bodily or “without a thought”. Analysing her own responses to the film *The Piano* she writes: “Campion’s film moved me deeply and touched me throughout, stirring my bodily senses and my sense of my body. The film not only “filled me up” and often “suffocated” me with feelings that resonated in and constricted my chest and stomach, but it also “sensitized” the very surfaces of my skin—as well as its own—to touch. Throughout *The Piano*, my whole being was intensely concentrated and, rapt as I was in what was there on the screen, I was also wrapped in a body that, here, was achingly aware of itself as a sensuous, sensitized, sensible material capacity.” ‘What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh,’ *senses of cinema*, April 2000, http://sensesofcinema.com/2000/conference-special-effects-special-affects/fingers/.
was how the voice-to-text app produced consistent errors, sometimes based on my accent, and others, on more mysterious forces. These ‘errors’ were incredibly productive and allowed me to break free from ‘more of the same’ while also toying with the idea that technology, that great modern hope for accurately observing and capturing useful, if not all data,¹ in this instance, was working against accuracy and effectively, against me. My use of the app also provided an interesting alternative to Kenneth Goldsmith’s labour intensive, endurance approach, which he celebrates as enjoyable in a way that ignores the reader all together and which he seems to want to raise to the level of a spectacle.

Far from this “uncreative” literature being a nihilistic, begrudging acceptance—or even an outright rejection—of a presumed “technological enslavement,” it is a writing imbued with celebration, its eyes ablaze with enthusiasm for the future, embracing this moment as one pregnant with possibility. There is joy is evident in the writing itself, in which there are moments of unanticipated beauty, some grammatical, others structural, many philosophical: The wonderful rhythms of repetition, the spectacle of the mundane reframed as literature, a reorientation to the poetics of time, and fresh perspectives on readerliness, but to name a few.²

Rather than promoting this degree of labour, which presupposes the privilege of having the free time to do it and refocuses attention back onto the apparent sovereignty of the writing subject (which Goldsmith claims to want to avoid), why not outsource the process?³ Ideally, for Where I find myself or, when I arrived, I wished there was Optical Character Recognition software that didn’t just convert visual text from film into editable, searchable digital text, but converted visual everything into text.

By transcribing the film a second time, I wanted to also introduce the idea of both a retake and a re-experiencing. The retake can generally be understood as an attempt to either extract more from something or to improve on something. It can also be used to practise, experiment, or to rid something of distracting or unnecessary elements. Effectively, to purify.⁴ I wanted to also indicate, through this second transcription, an unexplained drive to accumulate observational data. This was to play with

¹ This drive is often predicated on security or improved service. For example, surveillance of Internet browsing to prevent terrorist attacks or driving data for individual Uber drivers being used to define and identify ‘good’ or ‘reliable’ drivers.
⁴ The film director Robert Bresson’s used repetitive retakes both as a way to improve; “Several takes of the same thing, like a painter who does several pictures or drawings of the same subject and, each fresh time, progresses towards rightness.” and also to ‘neutralise’ his actors; “Models. What they lose in apparent prominence during the shooting, they gain in depth and in truth on the screen. It is the flattest and dullest parts that have in the end the most life.” Robert Bresson, Notes on Cinematography (Urizen Books. New York. 1977), 37, 53.
the expectation that by being methodical and painstakingly thorough in the description of something we may eventually arrive at the thing itself. In this approach the end goal is premised not on the sophistication of the recording technology, but rather on quantity. The second transcription also raises questions about possible motivations behind my practice. For example, is the author obsessive, trying to hold onto a discrete experience, a fan of the film, or searching for something? Or maybe the author is searching for something within himself which can only be accessed by observing the machinery of his perceiving or through the process of transcription? A similar point is made regarding Susan Howe’s approach to writing through. “Howe does not so much “write through”—as John Cage did—precursors like Thoreau, Peirce, Swift and Stella, as allow herself to be written through.”

The Director, Agnes Varda, also engages with this dialectic between something which is not us, becoming us, and our producing something which is of us, which becomes not us once actualised. In my case, written. The line below from her film The Gleaners and I also provides an interesting introduction to the titles, ‘Hand’ and ‘Animal’, and the ‘portraits’ of Bruegel paintings, repeated throughout Where I find you or, the shore.

In a department store in Japan, on a top floor, there were Rembrandt paintings, original Rembrandts. Saskia up close. And then my hand up close. I mean, this is my project: to film with one hand my other hand. To enter into the horror of it. I find it extraordinary. I feel as if I am an animal, what’s worse, I am an animal I don’t know. And here’s Rembrandt’s self-portrait, but it’s just the same in fact, always a self-portrait.

The second transcription also plays on the materiality of film by being constrained within a 35mm wide text box, the width of the original film. By doing this, I intended to draw attention to the shared material restrictions of film and writing mentioned in the Introduction, and also highlight the limits of lineated writing when trying to effectively capture something like the motion and complexity of film, let alone reality. Another loss. I also wanted to distinguish my transcriptions from the immense fields of text produced by Banner and Goldsmith. For me, their departure from “proscriptive lineation in favor of margin-to-margin madness” carries with it the belief that immensity, quantity, even

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1 “The aspiration to “capture the world in words” is frequently implicit in writing… One longs to diminish the inevitable loss of oneself and one’s experiences that time and mortality bring about.” Lyn Hejinian, “Language and “Paradise”” in The Language of Inquiry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 73.
2 This question inverts in a way Roland Barthes comment that photographs of him captured only his identity, not his value. Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida (Vintage Books London, 2000), 110.
5 This quote from Craig Dworkin relates to work by some of the L=A=N=G=U=A=T=E poets. It can just as aptly be applied to the more ‘epic’ examples of conceptual writing where the quantity of text presented, reliant on a margin-
excess, and the requisite labour needed for this, is significant and of value. Additionally, the resultant publication, in Banner’s case, translates an accessible medium into a prohibitively long and dull book. Aside from her idea for this work, it is questionable what value the actual making of it actually has. My 35mm limit to the line also picks up on how material, or for that matter, temporal, limitations can have formal and other consequences within poems. On the latter, Lynn Keller writes; “Fanny Howe – who had three children within four years – has also observed that the domestic duties that constrained her to write “only in fits and starts” profoundly affected her style and contributed to her work becoming more eccentric, disjunctive, and generally hybrid.”

That this second transcription has visible gaps in the text throughout it, and is presented in unequal lengths flowing down the page, implies it is either missing words, poorly rendered, or somehow degenerating. Placed next to the short lined and unjustified first transcription, it appears as if some pruning or tidying of this has been carried out to produce the second, however, it has been executed poorly. If we adopt the view that the second transcription is damaged somehow, we could postulate that the process of transcription itself may be to blame. Furthermore, this damage is not just visual but also effects grammar, accuracy and at times, sense. The suggestion is, we have no assurance a third transcription will not result in further damage. Taking this reading to its logical conclusion, the drive to gather data through transcription, to accumulate, may eventually result in the complete destruction of the source.

The second transcription also compounds the confusion around the presence of characters in the first transcription due to the floating gendered pronouns never allowing it to become clear who is carrying out a particular action, or having their clothing described. Through the apps mis-scripting of my to-margin line, is accepted uncritically as valuable, or more ‘accurate’ in today’s digital world, despite their concern with the prescriptive line in other forms of poetry. Marjorie Perloff uses Dworkin’s quote in “Conceptual Poetry and the Question of Emotion,” The Literatures of Modernity Distinguished Speakers Series, Jorgenson Hall 2014, http://www.stuttgarterschule.de/Perloff_Conceptual_Poetry.pdf.

See A R Ammons’ long poem Tape for the Turn of the Year, where lineation was determined by the width of the machine tape he used to write it on, or consider Rae Armantrout’s response when asked about her use of short lines; “In the interest of full disclosure, I might add that I write in a lined notebook and I have really big sloppy handwriting. That may also have something to do with what I see as a line.” (‘Why the short lines?’ Poets Q&A with Rae Armantrout, Interview with Harriet Staff).


I’m reminded of William Basinski’s The Disintegration Loops (2002-2003) where he attempted to salvage earlier recordings made on magnetic tape by transferring them into digital format, however, the tape had deteriorated to the point that as it passed by the tape head the magnetised metal came off the plastic backing. The loops were allowed to play for extended periods as they deteriorated further, with increasing gaps and pauses in the music.
dictation, a proliferation of ‘new’ characters appear. Now given proper names, incorrectly, they appear more solid and definite, yet they cannot be referred back to the pronouns of the first transcription. There is also the appearance of an ‘I’ in the second transcription which implies an author is now present. This is not the case but rather another error produced by the app. There is a certain irony within this setup in that a character who can be ‘located’ in both transcriptions is Brand’s butler and this character is mute. The voice-to-text app also produces a collection of capitalised words, seemingly at random. That these words appear now more significant sets up a puzzling tension within the lines and shifts many of them into reading as if emphasis is required or a sense of presence is being ascribed to words which may not deserve it.

I want to now briefly mention a few areas of concern with *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* that I identified while planning and writing it. These will not be explored in depth but I feel it is important to raise them. They relate to ideas of privilege, poetic witness and some conceptual writers’ understanding and treatment of the subject in writing. Firstly, some conceptual writers hold that in our current Internet age personal identity and subjectivity are no longer fixed, which means they can be shed or suspended if an author chooses to do so.¹ *Where I find myself or, when I arrived* is predicated on my hiding myself within a procedural process. This belief is problematic as there are many who argue such a casual approach towards the concept of personal identity and subjectivity is something not afforded to others, persons of colour for example. Sueyeun Juliette Lee explores this in her essay, “Shock and Blah: Offensive Postures in “Conceptual” Poetry and the Traumatic Stuplime” and it is an area I wish to consider in future writing.

> “Whiteness” doesn’t have to care—it doesn’t have to have a body or a history, etc. Writers of difference ought to care whereas “conceptual” writers don’t have to. They get to remain unaffected. Whiteness allows them to be read as dwelling in abstraction and play which writers of difference aren’t typically afforded unless they clamor for it... We still predominantly read them from an embodied standpoint.²

The second issue which became evident was to do with my choice of film: a 1940s melodrama

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¹ “Further inflaming the exchange [on his reading of Martin Brown’s autopsy report as poetry] is Goldsmith’s belief that a hallmark of uncreative writing is the irrelevance of inescapable identity, since the Internet allows a person to hide behind a multiplicity of names and profiles. Some poets of color feel that Goldsmith is subtly denying selves that they wish to assert and explore.” Alec Wilkinson, “Something Borrowed,” *The New Yorker*, October 5, 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/10/05/something-borrowed-wilkinson.

depicting a delusional, repressed woman pursuing an unreal relationship, who is forced eventually to marry a man she doesn’t love because she is pregnant. The gender stereotypes are clear throughout the film and we are forced to witness the friction between the cruel and indifferent world on screen and Lisa’s seemingly blind acceptance of her fate. My concern with choosing Letter from and Unknown Woman was that it (and even the genre) could be considered sexist. I have not explored “against the grain” readings of melodrama or this film in any depth, however, there are numerous essays by feminist film critics on melodrama which attempt to “open up space to allow for more positive analyses of female characters and female spectators”¹ which I would point readers to if concerned about this matter. Tania Modleski’s, “Time and Desire in Woman’s Film” is one such example.²

To clarify my choice, however, I chose this film principally because it was black and white, it was fictional as well as being historically and cinematically strange, thus creating a useful distance for me,³ I am interested in melodrama’s capacity to say more than it appears to be saying.⁴ I am fascinated by memory, longing and unrequited love, and the film was set in Vienna, a city I would later visit. It was also a contrary choice in that I wanted to avoid the factual, emotive, somewhat obvious, overtly of-the-time source texts used by some conceptual writers.⁵ My choice of Letter from an Unknown Woman was a move away from these types of sources. By doing this, and then favouring its surface, I hoped to avoid either mishandling sensitive content or ignoring responsibility for my poetic decisions.⁶

² ibid.
³ I like Susan Sontag’s reply when asked why The Volcano Lovers is set in the past: “To escape the inhibitions connected with my sense of the contemporary, my sense of how degraded and debased the way we live and feel and think is now. The past is bigger than the present.” “Susan Sontag - The Art of Fiction No.143,” Interviewed by Edward Hirsch, The Paris Review, last updated Winter, 1995. http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1505/susan-sontag-the-art-of-fiction-no-143-susan-sontag.
⁵ For example, Kenneth Goldsmith’s attempt to reframe and repurpose Martin Brown’s autopsy report in his reading, “The Body of Michael Brown” at Brown University (March 2015), or Vanessa Place’s Tragodia, where she reproduces verbatim official documents relating to rape cases.
⁶ “Goldsmith wishes to present art as a free pass for blatant disregard, while pretending his appropriative performances are not in the service of any values or ideological framework (he ‘does not editorialize’, as if the “artist-poet” incurs no responsibility for the selection, manipulation and presentation of texts).” Amy King. “Why are People So Invested in Kenneth Goldsmith? Or, is Colonialist Poetry Easy? www.vidaweb.org March 18, 2015.
Given, however, that I was a man watching a ‘woman’s film’ which presented a woman suffering at the hands of a rather misogynistic man, did I have a certainly responsibility when transcribing it to address this? To expand on this notion of my responsibility, did I also need to consider the fact that this film was made in 1948 and was set in a city, in a country, which perpetuated the horrors against humanity of the Second World War? My question was, did I have a responsibility to consider a poetics of witness for the traumas and pain depicted in the film and that ‘surrounding’ its production? This confusion was compounded by my reading around Charles Reznikoff’s descriptive approach and his poetics of witness. Robyn Creswell writes; “There is something frustratingly vague about the notion of a poetry of witness… Does the poet of witness need to have direct experience of the events in question, …or can witnessing take place at a distance, so to speak? Some of the most powerful poetry of witness—Charles Reznikoff’s “Testimony,” for example, …does not rely on having been present at the events in question.” Is a poetics of witness also needed for fictional content then? What about fictional content based on fact?

Lastly, was my use of this film and its depiction of a suffering, lonely woman, inappropriate in some way? Should I have chosen a film where a male protagonist suffers a terrible fate instead? Would this have been a more responsible choice for me, as a man? These questions were born from similar questions being raised about some conceptual writer’s appropriation of material which they themselves had no connection to.

The primary critiques of offensive “conceptual” writing that I’ve read are that writers influenced by a post-Reznikoff poetics are making use of traumatic events and traumatised communities that they themselves do not participate in or have direct connection to. There is…a responsibility which comes with engaging in a poetry of witness which certain poets are flagrantly ignoring, preferring instead to almost parody trauma and pain for their own personal gain.²

In keeping with this final observation I will finish with a question which I would like to further explore at a later date; what are my responsibilities when working with found content, whether it be fictional or real?

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Confluent tides of swarm
loiter

– Mina Loy\(^1\)

The question is this, is it possible to suggest more to replace that thing. This question and this perfect denial does make the time change all the time.

– Gertrude Stein\(^2\)

*Where I find you or, the shore* is based on three months living in Vienna in late 2015 and early 2016. This city is the setting for *Letter from an Unknown Woman* and a grand, opulent place layered with rich, complex political and cultural histories and packed with churches, museums, galleries and palaces. It is the birthplace of modern psychiatry, Modernist architecture, twelve-tone music and has been described as the birthplace of Modernism. However, despite the depth and influence of this wealth of culture and intellectual rigor, the city has an incredibly dark past. During the Second World War and Nationalist-Socialist rule in Austria, most of Vienna’s Jewish population were deported and murdered. Even before the war started, all of Vienna’s synagogues except one were destroyed. This complicated history sets up an odd tension between the city’s opulence and cultural prepotence and the base atrocities carried out there. This tension can be felt and even seen if one spends enough time there. Vienna really is a city of “high culture built on other people’s suffering”.\(^3\)

*Where I find you or, the shore* is situated within the city’s opulent past, that is, within the excessively grand Kunsthistorisches Museum. Not just within this museum, but within Saal X (Hall 10, or also translated as Gallery 10 or Room 10) of the Picture Gallery which houses one of the world’s best collections of Pieter Bruegel the Elder paintings. It was in this room, with this collection, that I spent considerable time speaking with Dublin artist, Isabel Nolan. Our conversations ranged from art and

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writing and Vienna and travelling, to pets and family and fears and tenderness. A friendship developed in this museum in this room with these paintings and those conversations significantly changed how I now view art and my own writing.

Where I find you or, the shore is an attempt to remember, reminisce and feel some of the feelings I had at that time or, at worst, experience myself trying to remember. This museum, Hall 10, the hundreds of visitors who passed through while we were there, the well-situated and comfortable seating and, of course, the Bruegel paintings and our conversations, along with an abundance of autobiographical and biographical details, are all vital to this act, or series of acts, of remembering. There is a problem from the outset with this project, however, due to my Aphantasia my memories are not sensually rich or deep, nor do they hold any emotional weight; in fact, I get no images, sounds, smells or feelings when I recall this time. All I get are words, concepts and knowings\(^1\) and these are flat, odorless, silent and invisible. If I were to write down what I do remember, it would effectively be a dot-point list made up of individual words and plain, descriptive statements.\(^2\) It would not be poetic in any traditional sense.

To try and transcend this Aphantasic limitation by assisting my memory, I supplemented my recollections with secondary research material, including a lot of visual material. This either provided context for what I could remember, triggered memories I couldn’t arrive at uneaided, or gave me at lease the illusion of some depth and connection to my memories. It included photographs I took while in the museum, images found in books and on the Internet, emails from Isabel, writing and lectures on her artwork, books on, or set in, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and material relating to Bruegel’s paintings. I also included other, more theoretical and initially oblique material, out of interest but also in the hope of triggering memories which did not surface through the more obvious method of using photographs and emails. This latter material was informally limited to anything that caught my interest while reading about hands and about animality. Obviously these are very broad research topics and possibly confusing when considered within the confines of a creative project, especially

\(^{1}\) Although not a word, there isn’t one that captures the non-idea-more-than-a-thought mental content I experience. The phrase ‘I just know’ is a common response when a person with Aphantasia is asked how they can describe a friend or know the last road on the left will take them to the museum.

\(^{2}\) See my discussion of Blaise Cendrars’ Kodak and Philippe Soupault’s “cinematographic poems” and the effect films and photography had on poetic modes of expression later in my exegesis. This ‘snapshot’ and montage approach is also useful to consider in the context of Where I find myself or, when I arrived.
given the parameters for that project already mentioned, so in light of this, I will say more about these two terms later in my exegesis.

Each of my ‘memory-returns’ to Hall 10, because this is how imagined the process I was undertaking, did not adhere to any strict sense of time, where not chronological, nor were they, nor will they ever be, completed. They are fragmented, fleeting and transition, often quickly and without warning, from terse statement to literal or lyrical description (often of details) to quotation to single words to fictional assertion to splinters of narrative. Things in this world are fleeting however, associations and connections can be made easily while reading, subjects identified, and the textual layout, which appears from the outset to be very constructed, allows space to read between or across sections. Along with highlighting the materiality of the text these typographic variations also give my recollections a spatial quality. The fragments and sections of text could also easily be reordered without loss of affect which gives Where I find you or, the shore, a serial quality.

The series describes the complicated and often desultory manner in which one thing follows another. Its modular form—in which individual elements are both discontinuous and capable of recombination—distinguishes it from the thematic development or narrative progression that characterize other types of the long poem. The series resists a systematic or determinate ordering of its materials, preferring constant change and even accident, a protean shape and an aleatory method.

I had a distinct sense while writing each of these sections I was entering Hall 10 for the first time, regardless of whether I was relying on my memory or research material. This was because each time I entered, the seats, red velvet guardrails, light, subjects in paintings, smells, visitors, creaking parquet floor and conversations, were only glimpsed before I was back outside watching it immediately fade to black, being flooded by a busy, insanely detailed and at times oppressive, museum, or clouded by the demands of the present as I tried to recall and capture those happy times. I was always left longing for more clarity, depth and emotion. This busy and distracting ‘outside’ and my repeated attempts to escape it could be used to expand upon the idea of the retake discussed in relation to Where I find myself or, the shore. My repeated visits to Hall 10, as with my repeated transcriptions, were no longer

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1 “The visual aspect of the work—the look of the words on the page—is clearly important, but spatial relations are important in other ways too. Howe’s text suspends narrative in favor of webs of thematic concern. History and language are imagined spatially, with associations being made that may depend on a word’s proximity to others on the signifying chain or to distant historical or literary echoes.” Will Montgomery, The Poetry of Susan Howe: History, Theology, Authority. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 114.

attempts to hone or accumulate something valued but a ritual designed to avoid something unpleasant.¹

Each of my visits to Hall 10 is presented in Where I find you or, the shore as a section entitled HALL X.² This titling replicates the SAAL X above each of the doors leading into and out of the room however, the X also symbolises the missing solidity that objects, people and scenes have throughout both Where I find myself or, when I arrived and Where I find you or, the shore. Upon entering HALL X, the reader is presented with a series of repeated common words around which description and other material swarms as if trying to endow each with specificity or formulate a narrative.¹ Is this white rose the same as that one? However, I never progress beyond HALL X and despite the clarity of the sentences and the confidence present in each statement, things appear to go around in circles. As Stein writes: “Beginning again and again is a natural thing even when there is a series… Everything is the same except composition and as the composition is different and always going to be different everything is not the same.”⁴

Along with the idea of the swarm, I also conceived of Where I find you or, the shore as a series of waves at a shoreline which, whenever I tried to describe them, were covered with a second layer. These constantly rolling layers highlighted some elements, blurred some, and erased others.⁵ This image of the shoreline, which I also reference in the title of my thesis, was intended to convey both the horizontal aspect of a shoreline and the vertical churn of waves rolling in. In writing Where I find

¹ Francis Ponge’s “The Notebook of the Pine Woods” provides a good example of the retake as a form of escape from the present. In this work he returns to the pine woods again and again in search of the pleasure he had felt there in the past. A pleasure now desperately wanted following the Nazi invasion of France. “Despite, or because of, the catastrophic, terrifying events unfolding around him, this burning need to find an adequate means of rendering the pleasurable sensations he experienced within the forest of pines becomes an intense quest for Ponge.” Andrew Epstein, “‘The Rhapsody of Things as They Are’: Stevens, Francis Ponge, and the Impossible Everyday,” Wallace Stevens Journal 36 no. 1, (Spring, 2012): 55.

² I have chosen to translate Saal as hall, rather than room or gallery, to capture both the grandness, ceremony and containment associated with halls and the liminality of the hall-way. Where I find you or, the shore plays with these notions of stasis and movement throughout. Where I find myself or, when I arrived also draws on these, most obviously in its setup, the experience of bodily stasis while watching a film.

³ This transition from one world into another and a corresponding shift in reality is a common contrivance in all forms of literature and film. Part of my motivation for using it came from an interview with Isabel where she speaks about the ways in which an arch (which also repeatedly appear in my poem) “announce[s] that some kind of shift is taking place”. “Thing Is Mostly Space - Isabel Nolan,” In conversation with Kelly Baum, Curator, Modern and Contemporary, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://vimeo.com/146504577.


⁵ An obvious comparison with this description is with dream imagery.
you or, the shore I wanted to remain faithful to the form of my recollections, that is, to both their horizontal and vertical movement.¹ (This multi-directionality is also visible in the layout of this part.) To achieve this I wrote them as quickly as I could,² avoiding any sort of contemplation. They were however, later edited. My desire was to experience that time with Isabel, not make sense of it; “to make, not to know.”³ Additionally, I believed if I adopted a more ponderous, reflective approach and wrote from my intellectual understanding of that time, I would lose something essential and vitally important to my experiences and the writing would be lifeless, consisting of “inherited definitions, stale descriptions, and habitual ways of perceiving”.⁴ Flat lifeless writing would certainly not stir my memories and emotions as I hoped it would.

Where I find you or, the shore is essentially my getting down on paper past experiences which I have stored in my memory as a series of flat, unpoetic dot-points and then building on these, working them, to try to generate depth, solidity and richness. This process involves an obvious tension between my poetic intentions and my Aphantasia. It is also the opposite of what I was doing in Where I find myself or, when I arrived. There I translated and condensed rich visual information into pared down statements of fact (if you were to consult the movie).⁵ In Where I find you or, the shore I translated memories stored almost perfunctorily back into imagery which was sensually rich. I did not evaluate my memories nor the material I gathered throughout my research. Instead, it was all considered equal, just content – words, concepts and knowings. To convey a sense of my searching, constructive and concrete approach there are numerous references to solidity, retrieving, capturing, finding and building in Where I find you or, the shore.

¹ While my understanding and use of these terms differs from Lyn Hejinian’s she provides a useful explanation of how both can be wrangled through poetry. “I can only begin a posteriori, by perceiving the world as vast and overwhelming; each moment stands under an enormous vertical and horizontal pressure of information, potent with ambiguity, meaning-full, unfixed, and certainly incomplete. What saves this from becoming a vast undifferentiated mass of data and situation is one’s ability to make distinctions.” “The Rejection of Closure,” The Language of Inquiry, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 41.
⁴ “One of the goals of poetry for both Stevens and Ponge is to “refresh” our sensation of life…, to render the familiar strange and therefore newly perceptible, by resisting ready-made language, clichés, handed-down descriptions.” Andrew Epstein, ““The Rhapsody of Things as They Are”: Stevens, Francis Ponge, and the Impossible Everyday,” Wallace Stevens Journal 36, no. 1, (2012): 58.
⁵ This drive was more extreme in Western Compositions where cinematic content was reduced to single words.
As everything I work from in my writing is essentially just content, lacking any sensory depth when written down, each object, action, colour or particular detail in *Where I find you or, the shore* is effectively gleaned from a flat horizontal layer of content.\(^1\) For example, the dogs in the foreground of Bruegel’s *Hunters in the Snow* are level with Isabel’s comments about her deceased pet dog, George Bataille’s writings about animality and fictional scenes involving dogs. These levels of “dogness” in my consciousness inform and build on and eclipse each other. Waves. Glimpses. This layering or circling approach is used by Alice Notley in *Alma, or The Dead Women* where the narrative structure is “(i) autobiographical (the communal of Alma references Notley’s past, her family in Needles, Arizona, the Mohave desert, its geology, animals and plants, her husbands and sons), (ii) fictional (invented), (iii) historical, both the narrative of history and the narrative of myth, and (iv) the cumulative broken narratives of the present.”\(^2\) My approach, I hoped, would also allow for other, more unconscious material to surface which would ensure greater fidelity to the form and movement of my recollections. To quote Notley on her own writing practice; it is “an attempt at a balance between conscious and automatic controls” conscious for “honesty’s and clarity’s sake” and unconscious “for a deeper veracity’s sake”.\(^3\)

*The Narrow Interior of the Shore* is permeated throughout by a number of these dualities: conscious/unconscious, looking/reading, stasis/movement/, black/white, reality/artifice, self/other, remembering/forgetting, past/present, material/immaterial, interior/exterior, up/down, vertical/horizontal, fact/fiction. There are also structural and visual dualities in the two transcriptions, the parallel lines in *Where I find you or, the shore* (vertical/horizontal), the two parts which make up the creative component (self/other) and the repeated section headings (animals and humans by using the word hands). I initially decided to research the latter because I was interested in the idea that artistic production (revealing something to someone else) is dependent on our being free from non-artistic labour (having unburdened hands) and it was our hands and our ability to ‘point’ towards

\(^1\) Agnes Varda’s film *The Gleaners and I* and her gleaning approach to film-making provided a useful method for *Where I find you or, the shore*. It was also a useful alternate way to understand the seemingly unequivocal yet necessarily aleatory choices made by Modernist poets in their long poems. For Varda, the process of writing narration, choosing shots, encountering subjects, editing, choosing music is “all chance working”. *The Gleaners and I* (*Les glaneurs et le glaneuse*), Cine-Tamaris, 2000.


significant things which distinguished us from most animals.¹ Put simply, that to represent or highlight something in the world by produce art or writing about it, something has to first be released (non-artistic labour for example). Hands also share in common with film and photography the power to communicate meaning without relying on language. A wave goodbye, for example. Animality provided a useful foil for the humanism implicit within the lyric while also allowing me to view the animals depicted in paintings, and Isabel’s dog, in a different light. The follow quotes by Frederick Engels and Martin Heidegger were what initially inspired me to adopt these two terms within my research and try to incorporate some of this material into Where I find you or, the shore.

Before the first flint could be fashioned into a knife by human hands, a period of time probably elapsed in comparison with which the historical period known to us appears insignificant. But the decisive step had been taken, the hand had become free and could henceforth attain ever greater dexterity; the greater flexibility thus acquired was inherited and increased from generation to generation.²

Man (sic) is not first of all man, and then also occasionally someone who points. No: drawn into what withdraws, drawing toward it and thus pointing into the withdrawal, man first is man. His essential nature lies in being a pointer. Something which in itself, by its essential nature, is pointing, we call a sign. As he draws towards what withdraws, man is a sign.³

Along with the content I drew on regarding hands and animality there was a pool of other concepts and ideas which I worked with to make, Where I find you or, the shore. However, these two motifs, which appear repeatedly in Where I find myself or, when I arrived (as descriptions of character’s hand movements and as dogs and horses) were important elements for linking the two parts together. It was these thematic nodes, the visual material I collected, my research and my memories, and the movement between these that I tried to observe and describe.⁴ A flow which I could only dip into to gather material before it too faded to black. This larger set included: sentimentality, art, representation, strangeness, tenderness, memory, language, experience as permutation, repetition, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, space, place, poetry as thinking, poetics of description, time, the phenomenology of reading, looking at paintings, photographs and viewing films, poetics of witness,

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¹ The hand is an incredibly complex part of the body. Not just physiologically but symbolically, philosophically, politically, economically, religiously, artistically and in numerous other ways.
⁴ Francis Ponge provides a good, more situated, description of this process. My river in Where I found you or, the shore, is less physical. “[W]riting about the Loire from a place along the banks of the river, I must constantly immerse my eyes and mind in it. Any time they dry up over an expression, back they must go into the waters of the river.” “Banks of the Loire,” Mute Objects of Expression, translated by Lee Fahnestock, (New York: archipelago books, 2008), 3.
intimacy, animal companionship, belonging, history, ekphrasis and beauty. To reiterate, all of this functioned only as content for me and all of it lacked the texture and depth it held when I first was exposed to it. It was just a pool of words and ideas to draw from, sometimes strategically and sometimes randomly. In one way, by extracting material from this pool and creatively reassembling it I was trying to reinsert the textural component I had lost. Perhaps this was the next best thing to sensual memories? Whatever it was it lead me back to thinking about Man Ray’s Indestructible Object and those made things that don’t sit so easily within the everyday world.

In Where I find myself or, when I arrived I restricted my writing to recording immediate perceptions only, a restriction which plays with our normal expectations of what is considered a description of a film. If we are asked about film we have seen we do not usually begin by speaking about a particular jacket a character wore. In a similar way, writing is ignored when people read, and meaning becomes the key focus. We go below this level. This tension between information and expectation can also be seen in Where I find you or, the shore. Here resistance to its being easily understood, despite its descriptive simplicity, plain language and normative grammar is produced by quick transitions from description to description or phrase to phrase without asserting anything concretely, or when an assertion is made, doing so in a style which renders it questionable or puzzling. The lines and sentences in Where I find you or, the shore make sense, they appear as meaningful units, however, no sooner is meaning present then it is quashed or dissipated or we are distracted by something else. FLOWERS, for example. As Wittgenstein writes, “Do not forget that a poem, although it is composed in the language of information, it is not used in the language-game of giving information.” This resistance is compounded by the distracting appearance of terms and phrases in all caps and the reappearance of the same words, again in the guise of a simple descriptions or commentary, yet unable to be steadied or accumulated. This movement shifts the focus from meaning to verbal texture and sound which compounds the lack of presence of the objects mentioned. Are words being used as

2 Words in all caps create a visual indentation however the indented area is occupied by text. The eye moves to the caped word then travels back to the text preceding it. Caps work to alter the flow or direction of reading. Caps also work on an interjectory level, where another may be said to be speaking, or highlighting, for reasons which may be unknown to the uncapped voice. Caps are also a visual play on the presence of capital within creativity, within all of life. I was influenced by Olsen in my use of caps but more so Hannah Weiner’s Clairvoyant Journal.
props we might ask? It also echoes the discontinuous existence of characters and objects in *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*. Is this white rose the same as that one?

During the development of *Where I find you or, the shore* I decided some sense of a stable subject was needed within the text to help me to form my ideas, but I did not want it to be me. I decided to focus on a ‘you’ (Isabel) and a dog around which I could allow and watch language swarm. Rosemary Waldrop’s three prose poems in *Curves to the Apple* were a useful model for a dialogic structure which was disjunctive, mysterious and fluid in ways which interested me and these three works also influenced other aspects of *Where I find you or, the shore*. For example, she structures “Reluctant Gravities” using sequentially numbered ‘conversations’ (‘Conversation 1,’ ‘Conversation 2’ up to ‘Conversation 24’) which provided me with an example of an approach to repeated titling which also had a sense of progression to it but also she gave each of these titles a sub-title. I decided against using a sequentially numbered title attached to a single term for Hall X because I wanted in to be a single room, the same room, that was being entered. But I did adopt it at the level of sub-headings. At this level, any suggestion of progression or accumulation within *Where I find you or, the shore* is contained within a defined architectural space. The animals and hands may change but their place in a room does not. Despite this constraint to subjects they leak elsewhere, spatially and temporally, and are also leaked into by everything around them and within them, both known and unknown. Perhaps this is what Agnes Varda was considering in the quote mentioned earlier? A haunting where the two things in relationship with each other actually haunt each other.

The identities of both subjects and objects in both parts of my thesis are not sharply defined. As mentioned, they leak. I do not have a strong sense of my own identity as a single, stable unit, nor do I have it for objects. And if you consider in this equation for me that the word “cup”, for example, is always all cups and this cup in my immediate field of vision because as soon as I stop seeing the cup before me, all I have is a generalised concept. Sure, it may have certain particulars attached to it, say that is it white and has an oval handle, but again, once I look away these become just general concepts. For me there is a constant, rapid slipping between concrete particulars that I see and generality. This also works in the reverse and applies to myself and to other people.

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I initially chose to write *Where I find you or, the shore* using the second person as a form of address to Isabel but also to avoid using the first. There is something about an “I” in the text which unsettles me. It seems too close and too fixed. It has an appearance of certainty which I do not trust. It also ignores the leaking and the flow. John Ashbery captures the fluid nature of personal pronouns when he says:

“The personal pronouns in my work very often seem to be like variables in an equation. “You” can be myself or it can be another person, someone whom I’m addressing, and so can “he” and “she” for that matter and “we”… my point is also that it doesn’t really matter very much, that we are all aspects of a consciousness giving rise to a poem…I guess I don’t have a very strong sense of my own identity…”

Trying to structure my circulatory thinking, the constant shifts from things being concrete to abstract and the flow of, often repeated, material (not just waves but extreme close-ups of waves— their ‘narrow interiors’), was the most challenging aspect of my thesis. I considered limiting the amount of time I spent writing *Where I find you or, the shore* to a single day, as Kenneth Goldsmith had done in *Fidget* and Bernadette Mayer in *Midwinter Day*, in the hope that a natural beginning and ending would appear and between these two a structure would reveal itself, and if not, I could still present the results as a failed yet possibly interesting experiment. I realised early on, however, the most suitable structure and form for this part could only be discovered in the actual writing of it. As Lyn Hejinian puts it, “The general form tends to grow quite naturally under the hand that writes it…”

What is clear from Hejinian’s comment is that each poem, if you decide to approach poetry in a certain way, openly, must discover its own distinct form. This sets these types of works apart from other forms of poetry and non-literary uses of language. It also opens these works up to having their layout and organisation considered significant. Rachael Blau du DuPlessis’ concept of segmentivity elaborates on this.

Poetry is that form of discourse that depends crucially on segmentation, on spacing, in its production of meaning. Poetry, she writes, involves “the creation of meaningful sequence by the negotiation of gap (line break, stanza break, page space)”; conversely, then, segmentivity, “the ability to articulate and make meaning by selecting, deploying, and combining segments,” is “the underlying characteristic of poetry as a genre.”

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2. “I most especially love having time be the structure which always seems to me to save structure or form from itself because then nothing really has to begin or end.” Bernadette Mayer to Lyn Hejinian. “The Rejection of Closure,” *The Language of Inquiry*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 90.
What became formally apparent to me while writing *Where I find you or, the shore* was firstly, the appearance of non-linguistic visual markers (parallel lines) to indicate breaks and framed imagist-like asides (the centred ‘portrait’ text-boxes). The former appeal to me because they activate the page without being considered writing as such. Yet they are not foreign to text either. There is also something so clean about them and they are like, given my previous comment, an embellished punctuation mark. For me they are the simplest representation of the horizon provided in a line of text. The two lines together also echo the materiality of film in the second transcript of *Where I find myself or, when I arrived*. The horizontal line is the closest visual marker to a landscape in writing. It divides the page establishing an above and below, a land and sky. What then is placed either side develops in relationship to this line and a sense of tension is produced. Elizabeth Joyce discusses Susan Howe’s use of the horizontal line: “Howe’s rules suggest the uncomfortable fissure set up by these horizontal lines. Using a mere line across the page with words above and below it, Howe would like to create the illusion of sun over water, of the correspondence of one story version with another, each changed in the course of the imperfection of reflection…”

The use of words or phrases in all caps in *Where I find you or, the shore* function as another visual signifier. These big words give visual texture to the page and as with the parallel horizontal lines and portraits or ‘word squares’ activate the page as a visual site and indicate some degree of experimentation is present, and this is all prior to any real reading. These elements let the reader know they are entering into a different kind of space of language, they are passing through an arch. These all cap words also erase what precedes them visually in that they fill the reader’s imagination with something which occludes what they have just been reading. FLOWERS. They are exclamatory in that they dominate what closely precedes or follows them. They clear a space around themselves in a sense. Libbie Rifkin raises this point writing about Charles Olsen’s work. “As in “Projective Verse”…these capitalized proclamations should be taken first as performances, meant to goad the poet himself into action and to clear some space on the field in which to act.”

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2. Brian Reed uses this phrase, following Rachel Blau DuPlessis, to describe Howe’s typographic grids. His essay provides a thorough analysis of the use of grids in poetry and art. “‘Eden or Ebb of the Sea’: Susan Howe's Word Squares and Postlinear Poetics,” *Postmodern Culture* 14, no. 2 (2004).
performative in another sense in that they indicate the possible presence of, real or not, voices other than the authors.

This suggested presence of another is secondary to the visual aspect in *Where I find you or, the shore.* As I do not hear words when I read, nor have any mental imagery, text in caps for me is only ever visual. I became interested in these visual markers, however, after reading Hannah Weiner’s *Spoke.* In this work, changes in typography indicate the presence of a different voice and the busyness of the page, with words and phrases written in all caps, underlined, italics and even written diagonally, appears like a conversation where each speaker is vying for space. Some of these voices Weiner didn’t even consider her own. As she explains, “It turned out that the regular upper and lower case words described what I was doing, the CAPITALS gave me orders, and the underlines or italics made comments. This was not 100% true, but mostly so.”¹ James Merrill’s *The Changing Lights at Sandover* also possesses other voices, however, these are not seen in the world but are voices from the ‘other side’ communicated via a weegee board. Merrill’s pages possess a similar cluttered feeling as Weiner’s. “The pages of the book are typographically unnerving, as blocks of otherworldly uppercase… alternate with mortal lower case.”²

To produce additional breaks or ruptures within *Where I find you or, the shore,* I used, as mentioned, a series of titles. My titling is taxonomic in its layering and either bluntly simple (ANIMAL) or elusively descriptive (The Narrow Interior of the Shore). These titles produce parts within wholes and sections within parts. Waves. Repetition is also an appealing poetic technique for me and is evident in both parts of my poem. I used it frequently at the level of theme, syntax, typography and word choice to create a sense of repeated-returning, of swarming. I initially looked at Anne Carson’s *Red Doc>* during my research for the second transcription, however, I found her use of repeated sections titled, “Wife of Brain” an interesting way to provide additional detail to previously visited themes or ideas.³ In my looking for and discovering the form for *Where I find you or, the shore,* Carson’s practice also reminded me that intentionality was not my only option. “This form was also a result of an accident with the computer. Carson hit a wrong button, and it made the margins go crazy. She

³ In addition to the main text, *Red Doc>* uses a distinct other voice, always titled, “Wife of Brain”. These centre-aligned poems function like a chorus, a collective voice commenting on the action. This helps to orientate the reader and adds to the texture of voices in the work.
found this instantly liberating. The sentences, with one click, went from prosaic to strange...”¹ I experienced a similar liberation with the errors produced in the second transcription of Where I find myself or, when I arrived.

It is clear by now that film, photography and painting, all visual representation, are very important to me. Without them I would be limited only to what I experience of the world with my eyes open. Once I close them, darkness, and my memories are all in words. And this has been the case all my life. So when writing I am always seeking to picture things. I am always thinking about film and photography because these mediums are the most identifiable with reality for me and the only things I can access that have captured the world out-there as it appears. These formats influence my writing a great deal. In this I share something in common, albeit via a very different route, with certain poets whose work was influenced by the emergence of photography and cinema into daily life in the 1920’s and 1930’s. To echo this historically and technologically significant effect on how poetry was conceived and written, in my work I have included portrait shaped vignettes of Bruegel’s paintings. These are snapshots of some of his works, details within these works and, as with photographs, they leave out a great deal and do not show what cannot be seen.

To be honest, I do not want to write another poem about Bruegel’s paintings, or Icarus falling into the ocean for that matter. There has been more than enough written, painted and composed about these already. So instead I have made ‘word pictures’ which “impose a visual order on the words, breaking them unnaturally and adding artificially extended spaces between the words.”² For me, the use of portrait formatted, partial descriptions of paintings by Bruegel, act as photographs. Not documentary photographs but snapshots, taken on the run. This is evident in the meagre amount of description provided in each one, the fact that they are not concluded with a full stop suggesting the description could continue on beyond the frame and that I present these descriptions of landscape paintings using a portrait layout.

For me, I am a novice and not interested in replicating or tidying, just a certain clarity. These images are just to trigger memories. For me they are primarily visual devices for shifting my poetic and


formal concerns within a large poem. So in *Where I find you or, the shore*, they offer details of the paintings present throughout this whole part. They are close ups of details within Room 10. As are my references to the colour of the seats or the sounds the floor makes when people walk across it. My understanding of these word squares or grids is primarily visual (snapshots taken by an amateur or hurried photographer), however, I’m acknowledge this formatting also has an effect on sound. “*Hinge Picture* is closely concerned with the detail of arranging words on the page. As Howe says in a recent interview, “*Hinge Picture* is formal in the sense that I obsessively used a justified margin. In those typewriter days I went to great trouble to get this effect. Then I thought it was a visual imperative, but now it seems sound-based.””

Despite various repeated elements within *Where I find you or, the shore* I still wanted to maintain a sense of openness, as discussed in the Introduction, and avoid any kind of conclusion or suggestion that, within this poem, I had in anyway exhausted my material. I wanted to illustrate that our being in the world, even at the level of perception or memory, necessitates an inexhaustible process of composition. As Gertrude Stein observes, “…the thing seen by everyone living in the living that they are doing, they are the composing of the composition that at the same time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living.” My intention was to illustrate that I could return to Hall 10 again and again and each time something would be found; that even the same things may be found but they would be different, altered in some way, because time had passed and essentially because we are always situated in the world in medias res. There are never any clear starting or finishing points, even if we restrict ourselves temporally (to ten minutes) or poetically (to a certain number of sentences or syllables). Lyn Hejinian comments on this within her own and Bernadette Mayer’s poetic practice.

> Whether the form is dictated by temporal constraints or by other exoskeletal formal elements—by a prior decision, for example, that the work will contain, say, x number of sentences, paragraphs, stanzas, stresses, or lines, etc.—the work gives the impression that it begins and ends arbitrarily and not because there is a necessary point of origin or terminus, a first or last moment.

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The implication (correct) is that the words and the ideas (thoughts, perceptions, etc.—the materials) continue beyond the work. One has simply stopped because one has run out of units or minutes, and not because a conclusion has been reached nor “everything” said.¹

I miss my conversations with Isabel, our time at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the Bruegel paintings, the January snow, the crazy Viennese, the late nights in bars and coffee houses so architecturally advanced that even those designed in the early 1900’s still exceed preset day standards. This very personal aspect of Where I find you or, the shore is a significant aspect of Part Two. My motivations for writing it were lyrical in nature. As with all of this thesis, I wanted to glean bits from here and there. And one place was from lyrical poetry. In a sense I needed lyrical poetry so I could respond to, and get closer to, these rich, overwhelming and incredibly tender experiences.² Really, Where I find myself or, when I arrived and Where I find you or, the shore can both be read as attempts to either gather enough data, through repeated contact with a temporally-limited phenomena, to thoroughly, efficiently, preserve it or, to build up from basic elements in my recent past a significant personal experience in the present. Obviously both of these goals are fraught but as I began this exegesis by saying, I am interested in longing. Regardless of my success, what is apparent in this attempted transition from detail to simplicity, or vice versa, is an interplay between surface and depth.

Just as in Where I find myself or, when I arrived I did not scrutinise the emotions or drives of characters, so too in Where I find you or, the shore, something significant has been omitted. The weight of art history, architecture, European history, political history and its inhumanity, in my thesis, becomes the site for two people who like talking about ideas and anything, to sit and do that. The grandness of Vienna becomes a stage for personal ruminations and friendship.³ As I wrote in Where I find you or, the shore; “Really, only the bits/that stick/are found”. It’s these bits, and the shifts and movements between them, which is where my experience of Vienna lies. Not in history or art books or the number of museums I visited. This ignoring of social context on some level is also a key characteristic of melodrama and of Letter from and Unknown Woman. ⁴ In melodrama the emotional

² Paul Holler, quoting Rae Armantrout, puts it well; “I write so that I won't be passively assaulted by sensations, events, statements, etc. I write to ‘talk back’ to the world,” says Armantrout. “I guess I feel it's polite to answer when you've been addressed. I write when I feel puzzled. I think in writing or by writing.” “An Interview with Rae Armantrout,” bookslut, July 2010, http://www.bookslut.com/features/2010_07_016299.php.
³ Thomas Bernhard uses a similar contrivance in his novel, Old Masters. In that work, Reger sits on the same bench in front of a Tintoreto painting and has done for over thirty years. This work is set in the Kunsthistorisch Museum.
⁴ The film was made in 1948 and set in a city which was the first to carry out the extermination of the Jewish population.
journey of the individual is foregrounded from the historical, political and cultural world in which it is set.

This lack of scrutiny is also obvious in the ‘word portraits’ of the Bruegel paintings. In these portraits I reduce grand works to a meagre number of single words and, at times haiku-like, descriptive statements. They are vignettes which could be correctly paired with each of the paintings they describe but they are glimpses only. I am starting from scratch with these works, and viewing them as if running past them. Despite the sheer volume of material already written on them, my approach refuses to consider any of it. It is as if I want to free them from the weight of these words, most especially from meaning. “Another way of approaching the thing is to consider it unnamed, unnameable, and describe it *ex nihilo*, but so well that it can be recognized– however, only at the end; its name, as it were, the last word of the text and not appearing until then.”

In *Where I find you or, the shore* I wanted to explore portraiture and a simple ekpharastic approach or basic poetics of description to produce variations of documentary-like, unpoetic works. Philippe Soupault’s cinematographic poem “Movie-house”, based on “montagelike transitions and the sudden transfiguration of objects” provides a useful example of this and connects my use of film to my pared-back style. The poems in Blaise Cendrar’s *Kodak*, (see “Japanese House” below as an example) which consist of vignettes “put down on paper with apparent immediacy and directness of a tourist’s photographic record” also capture something of my approach.

“Movie-house”

The wind strokes the posters
Blank
the cashier is made of china

Screen

the robot conductor directs the player piano
shots are heard
applause

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the stolen car disappears into the clouds
and the frozen lover has purchased a celluloid collar

But soon doors slam
Very elegant today
He has put on his top hat
His gloves too

The program changes every Friday¹

“Japanese House”
Bamboo stalks
Thin planks
Paper tautened to frames
There is no real home heating system²

These relatively literal descriptions, as with my work (although with mine I am describing a film, images of artworks, a room and my memories), appear accurate or true to the object or situation described however each belies a simplicity which we know straight away just by looking at the title. These descriptions are not the language of information but the language of poetry. They generate both a sense of familiarity in our being able to identify what their subjects are, but no sooner has this happened that strangeness arrives. Why these objects? Why are they so short and spare? Why in this way? Why using unusual line breaks?

By describing something in the world using language in this way a new thing is created. As Hejinian writes:

I propose description as a method of invention and of composition. Description, in my sense of the term, is phenomenal rather than epiphenomenal, original, with a marked tendency toward effecting isolation and displacement, that is toward objectifying all that’s described and making it strange.³

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the long poem for me is how you approach it if wanting to interpret it as a whole or carry out a close reading. The form seemingly prohibits any exhaustive

understanding. My research into discussions on specific examples of the form have either focused on particular parts of the works, discussed the form itself or selected some organising principal displayed throughout the work, whether that be visual, theoretical, poetic or methodological. None of these discussions are exhaustive and there is a sense with each only the surface of the works has been touched. I think this is one of the main appeals of many examples of the form, that there is always more to be found in them and that no matter how a reader approaches them there is always a feeling that one is beginning in medias res. Just as one is if one tries to understand life or the complexities of consciousness. In this respect the long poem formally mirrors life. A messy and strange occurrence which, as soon as you focus on one area or event, some disappear while others are illuminated. More waves. As Brian McHale writes:

How is one to negotiate or manage such flux? Critics, who in this respect (if no other) may be regarded as representative readers, tend to proceed by selecting “key” lines or passages, treating these as interpretative centers or “nodes” around which to organize the heterogeneous materials of the poem. Other materials come to be subordinated in various ways (explicitly or, more often, implicitly) to these “key” passages, for instance as exempla or illustrations, or as figurative or allegorical restatements—that is, as metonymically or metaphorically related to the “nodal” material. Alternatively, material lying outside the “nodes” is simply passed over in silence, so that the poem is reduced, in effect, to a skeletal structure of points that yield most readily to a particular interpretative orientation, the rest having disappeared, like the soft tissue in an X-ray image.¹

Conclusion

And so we are back to strangeness. A poem which cannot be taken in whole and which shifts and changes, even loses limbs or soft tissue, depending on how we approach it. This notion of strangeness is perhaps the most useful and interesting idea I have discovered through the process of this thesis. I have attempted to engage with it in two distinct ways and in one of them, Where I find myself or, when I arrived, highlighted how a conceptual approach does not have to reject lyric elements outright. I have also explored a descriptive poetics both from a literal standpoint and from a more connotative standpoint. Both approaches have aided me in understanding how language works for me given my Aphantasia. If I were to continue my research I would further explore the effects of cinema and

¹ Brian McHale, “How (Not) to Read Postmodernist Long Poems: The Case of Ashbery’s “The Skaters,”” Poetics Today 21 no. 3 (Fall 2000), 566.
photography on poetic practices and continue to develop a poetics which takes into account my condition.

Finally, to return to my first experience of strangeness and the image of *Indestructible Object*, I now realise the fear I felt was a precondition for strangeness and that strangeness is a necessity for curiosity. It is what is unfamiliar to us that ignites our curiosity. It is what keeps us going back to things, to repeatedly return to them, whether they be paintings by Bruegel, a sculpture by Man Ray, a poem by Lyn Hejinian, or even a pet. Because curiosity needs one other thing aside from strangeness, and that is care. We revisit what we find curious because we care about it. It reminds us of something deep down inside us which we long for and yet don’t really know how to get there, or how to stay there once we arrive. It fades to black and daily life comes flooding back in.

And this is precisely why long poems continue to be written, artworks and films made, music composed, and all the other myriad manifestations of curious things put together, because they remind us that we are curious beings at heart. As Paul Valery wrote, “A man (sic) is but an observation post in a wilderness of strangeness. We should speak of ‘the Strange’ as we speak of Space and Time.”

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**Secondary Material for Where I find you or, the shore**


I also read many articles and chapters on the subject of hands and animality which are not included here.